Ways that are Wary

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WAYS THAT
ARE WARY

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By LEMUEL DE BRA

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WAYS THAT ARE WARY

WAYS THAT ARE WARY

"No man ready to fly unarmed at a tiger, or plunge into a river and die without a pang, should be with me; but one rather, who is wary before a move and gains his ends by well-laid plans."—CONFUCIUS.

CHAPTER I

"Pity, O Chen, for they saw not
the approaching shadow of evil!"

AT last, Soo Wang, venerable importer and dealer in silks, ornamental wood carvings, and *ng ka py,* laid down his long-stemmed bamboo pipe and looked across the teak-wood desk at his daughter. It was the hour of midday rice, a quiet hour in *The Shop of Ten Thousand Profits.* From outside, the main street of San Francisco's Chinatown, came the muffled *slf, slf, slf* of padded slippers, pierced now and then with the sharp *click, click* of American heels; inside the store, in a corner office hidden by tapestries from the finest shops of Canton, Soo Wang and Ah Chee had lingered over their rice and tea.

"To know what we know," said Soo Wang, nodding his head sagely, "and to know what we do not know—that is understanding! Now the problem is quite simple; but the solution—*ts!* that is different! I have

meditated many pipes over the question; but I am as helpless as a white foreign devil trying to tell Shantung silk from Hang-chiu goods. And so, Little One, I may let you decide."

A look of surprise flashed into the girl's dark eyes; but she bowed her head respectfully and remained silent. Soo Wang, combing his thin gray beard with slender hands, regarded the girl through half-closed lids. Ah, but she was utterly desirable! In all Chinatown there were none so bright, so captivating as his little Ah Chee. Hair like the raven of Kwanlun; eyes as clear and beautiful as the lotus pools of Hu'ang; and cheeks that stirred fond memories of the peach blossoms in *The Valley of Fragrant Spring!*

"Now, Lee Quan, the artist, is an honest and learned man," went on Soo Wang. "The family of Lee is one of the most honourable and powerful in all China. But the youth has wasted his time in the foreign devil college learning to paint pictures instead of taking up some useful pursuit. Therefore, Quan's father rightly refuses to pay a single copper *cash* to buy the boy a wife. Thereupon, Quan declares that he, alone, will raise the two thousand dollars I am asking as your betrothal price. He urged the marriage broker to give him a week's time."

For about as long as it takes a butterfly to alight, the girl's silken lashes fluttered, then closed; and again Soo Wang narrowed his long, slant eyes and regarded her shrewdly.

"Then there is Bo Ch'at, the butcher. He has no learning; but he is a very rich man. He will give you

a good home, provide you with plenty of rice and flour; and he can pay at once the sum I ask.

"Of course, as anyone knows, it isn't proper for me to discuss this matter with you," went on Soo Wang, the merest shadow of a smile on his lips. "But it is written that a heart filled with love is more precious than chests of silver; so before you walk out of my house forever, I thought I would hold speech with you and grant your wish if I could do so without loss to me.

"That is all," he concluded abruptly, picking up his counting abacus and a sheaf of papers. "Go now, for I have much to do before the Custom-house closes."

Ah Chee arose.

"But, honourable father, I have not spoken. I——"

The old merchant looked up, a slender hand poised over the abacus, an indulgent smile tugging at his lips.

"Walk your way, my *Thousand of Gold!* Do not annoy me with small talk! *Kuai!* You have spoken your heart plainly and emphatically!"

Then, as Ah Chee stood in hesitation, her lips parted like the petals of an almond bud, her jewelled fingers plucking nervously at the embroidered hem of her jacket, she saw, over her father's bowed head, the tapestries that hung across the doorway drawn stealthily aside. Into the opening came slowly a high-cheeked, saffron face with sensuous lips and drooping eyes. Out of those drooping eyes crept a sullen leer that lingered for an instant on Soo Wang's bowed head,

then crossed the desk, crawled slowly up Ah Chee's jacket, and over the girl's face like some foul, living thing.

"Father!" Ah Chee whispered chokily: "Bo Ch'at is here!"

CHAPTER II

"Look at a man's acts! Watch his motives!"

WITHOUT ceremony, Bo Ch'at appropriated the ebony stool vacated by Ah Chee. He got out his monogrammed case, selected a cigarette, and lighted it.

"How's b'iness, Soo?" he inquired in his clipped English, of which he was very proud.

Soo Wang gave the butcher a lip-smile. He answered in musical Cantonese:

"I am very busy, Bo Ch'at. Duties must be paid to-day on my latest importations of *ng ka py,* and I have not yet checked the statement from my broker."

"I am also very busy," retorted Bo Ch'at, lapsing into his native tongue. "I hope you won't keep me long. Old Louie, the maker of brooms, ascended the dragon yesterday; and I have to roast a hog, three ducks, and three chickens for the funeral.

"Well, to business!" Bo Ch'at went on, and there was something almost sinister in the way he snapped his fat, long-nailed hand to jar the dead ash from his cigarette. "It is about your daughter, named Ah Chee. I have decided to take her as a wife. Yesterday I told the marriage broker to offer you the two thousand dollars you demand, although I think your price much too high. But I don't like to deal with a fat old woman who earns her rice arranging marriages

for persons who know more about it than she can ever learn. So I have come to you to conclude the bargain. That's my way. Decide what to do—then let nothing stand in my way. That's how I built up the biggest pork business in Chinatown. Your daughter should be proud to go as a first wife to the house of Bo."

Soo Wang reached for his pipe. Suddenly his eyes had narrowed and become dull and hard like crude teak. A moment before he had decided, for his daughter's sake, to wait and give Lee Quan every opportunity to obtain the betrothal price. If the youth, with no business training, could raise two thousand dollars in a week, he had great possibilities.

But there was an arrogance about this big-mouthed butcher that whipped the old man to immediate decision. He wanted to rid himself at once of this bigoted pork vendor, as one hurls stinking rice over the fence into the neighbour's yard.

"How unfortunate!" quoth Soo Wang, when he had taken three puffs on the amber mouthpiece. "Not an hour has passed since I concluded that matter. Old Gow, the writer of letters, is this moment preparing the announcement of my daughter's betrothal."

Bo Ch'at took a long draw.

"What," he asked, smoke writhing from his mouth and wide-spread nostrils, "is the man's family name?"

"He is of the family of Lee, named Quan—the son of Lee, the worker in gold and jade."

Bo Ch'at jerked the cigarette from his lips.

"*Haie-e!* Old man, do you know what you are doing?"

Soo Wang frowned impatiently, but before he could take his lips from his pipe, Bo Ch'at went on:

"Do you know that you are giving your daughter to a man who earns his rice selling the forbidden white drug? Some day the Government officers will trap him and he will go to prison. Then, where will be your family pride, venerable Soo?"

"What strange talk!" exclaimed Soo, his eyes wide. "What is this forbidden drug?"

"What! Do you not know?"

"You forget, Bo Ch'at," said the merchant coldly, "that I am of the older generation, a student of the classics, an honourable dealer in silks and woods and *ng ka py*. I have nothing in common with the white foreign devils, neither speaking their language nor worshipping their gods. In this land there are many wicked things, therefore, of which I know naught."

Bo Ch'at's eyes were drooping, his face as expressionless as a Wen-ce mask. He lighted another cigarette.

"Well, Soo, I will tell you. You remember back in the time of Mock Don Yuen, the scholar, when all of us wore queues, when every Chinese gentleman smoked his four pipes of opium every day, and when one had only to look at a man's opium pipes to tell if he were a rich merchant or a poor student or an ignorant coolie. So long as we paid the heavy opium tax demanded by the rich American Government no one cared how much opium the Chinese smoked; but

when white men and white women began using the poppy drug the foreign devils passed a law forbidding us to import any more smoking opium.

"After that, as you know, there was no opium to be had except from smugglers; and they were such robbers that most of us left off opium rather than pay their price. Some of our old men had used the drug for years, and when they could no longer buy opium they went out of their minds and killed themselves; but the young men either left off or found some way to continue smoking.

"But apparently you don't know what happened to the white men and white women who had been smoking opium. *Haie!* It was very funny. Many of them went crazy. They would get down on their knees in the dirt and tear their clothes and their hair, and call on their God, and beg the police to give them opium or kill them, they didn't care which; but the police would give them a curse and a kick and drag them away to jail.

"Finally these white men and women found they could relieve their suffering for a time by using a white powder made from opium. This powder is called morphine. Morphine is a terrible drug; and no Chinese in America ever uses it. At that time it could be bought and sold like rice; so before long practically every one of the white men and white women who had been smoking opium were putting this white drug in their arms with sharp needles and were worse off than before.

"To-day there is a law against morphine the same as

against opium, and the price for contraband morphine is sometimes as high as a hundred dollars for a single ounce, although the wholesaler gets only about fifteen dollars an ounce for the drug when sold lawfully. A few of our people, those who have more greed for gold than respect for their ancestral honour, make much money selling the white drug to the foreign devil morphine slaves. My words are easily proved."

"Then prove them! And if this be true of Lee Quan, by *The Nine Heavens,* my daughter shall never kneel before his household gods!"

"Within three days," concluded Bo Ch'at, rising, "you shall have all the proof desired."

Soo Wang stood up. For three breaths he studied the butcher's face.

"Let there be no tricks——"

Bo Ch'at lifted his drooping eyes.

"*Aih,* by the yellowed bones of my grandfather, there shall be no tricks! *Tso cha!* (Good-bye!)"

"Walk slowly, Bo Ch'at!"

For about the time it takes one to clean an opium bowl, the old merchant stood gazing at the swinging tapestries through which Bo Ch'at had passed. Then he sat down—and reached for his pipe.

"It is written," Soo Wang muttered in his pipe stem, "that without thought for far-off things there will be troubles near at hand."

He struck the brass gong that hung over the desk.

"Wing," he said, when one of his trusted men stood before him, "the butcher, Bo Ch'at, has just left. Go you and dog his steps. Report to me whenever pos-

sible whatsoever you see or hear. Do you understand?"

"Yes, venerable sir."

"Then walk your way!" And again Soo Wang struck the gong.

"Ah Lim, I fear misfortune may befall the son of my friend Lee, the worker in gold and jade. Go you and follow Lee Quan each day until he seeks his grass-seed pillow. Report to me whenever possible whatsoever you see or hear. Understand?"

Ah Lim winked his snapping black eyes and bowed from the hips.

"Then, be on your way!" commanded Soo Wang. "I hope you have a safe walk!"

When Ah Lim had gone, Soo Wang sat for a long moment gazing with narrowed eyes at a stand screen that stood before the door opening into the stairway that led up to the living-rooms. On this screen, deft fingers had worked in threads of many colours, figures of bamboo, chrysanthemums, plum-blossoms and epidendrums—emblems of the four seasons, summer, autumn, winter, spring. But Soo Wang had no eye for the beauty of handiwork. He raised his voice.

"Ah Chee!"

The girl stepped from behind the screen. Her face was as pale as the white narcissus, her eyes glistening with tears.

"Not until it was too late did I discover that you had returned and hidden behind that screen. It was very improper of you. Well, it seems that you overheard everything. Punishment enough!"

CHAPTER III

"Now mark ye, sires, how spawned this evil plot!"

The Meat Shop of Fragrancy and Prosperity was an inconspicuous store on one of Chinatown's quietest streets. At the rear of the store was an alley so narrow, so crowded and crooked, that even at high noon the place appeared dim and shadowy. Its official name was Hongkong Alley; the Chinese spoke of it as *The Alley of Lingering Shadows.*

Entering his store through the alley entrance, Bo Ch'at mounted the half-dozen steps to his main office and stood for a moment looking over the shop. His clerks were not busy; for Bo Ch'at dealt only in the choicest porks and catered only to the highest priced trade. His speciality was supposed to be the preparation of funeral meats.

In the main office were a long, high desk, a safe, a few stools, and other office equipment. Seated at the desk was a young man in a soiled blouse of black satin. He was Bo Ch'at's book-keeper. His accounts were few and simple. He spent much of his time appearing to pore over long columns of Chinese characters in an old ledger. Over this ledger, his sharp slant eyes kept a close watch on the meat shop, the front door, and the little known entrance from the alley in the rear. He had seen Bo Ch'at enter, but he did not look around.

"Where is Ah Kee?" asked Bo Ch'at in Cantonese.

"In the sausage room, sir."

"Very well, Leong. Do not disturb me until I call."

Bo Ch'at passed to the end of the long desk and came to an inconspicuous door marked in both English and Chinese "Private." Taking a key from his blouse, the butcher unlocked the door, passed in, closed the door again and locked it.

This private office was a small room without windows. It was lighted by a single incandescent globe over the flat-topped desk. On this desk were a few papers and a desk telephone. The walls were lined with shelves stuffed with a litter of bundles of various shapes and sizes wrapped in old newspapers. All of them were thick with dust. The floor was bare, but singularly clean and dustless.

Bo Ch'at's padded slippers made no sound, left no tracks on the dustless floor, as he crossed to the opposite corner and stood before one of the tiers of shelves. Here he pressed deftly and swiftly on several spots on the underside of one of the shelves. Instantly the shelf swung back, disclosing a small doorway in the wall, and steps that led down into darkness. Bo Ch'at passed through; the shelf swung back into place. Not a speck of dust had been disturbed.

At the foot of the stairs was a heavy, unpainted door. On the panel, Bo Ch'at sounded a signal, using the ends of his long nails in a swift and peculiar *rat-a-tat*. The door swung open. Bo Ch'at stepped in.

This room was even smaller than Bo Ch'at's private office. The walls were of rough pine, the ceiling of

the same material hung with smoked sausages. Suspended from the centre of the ceiling was an electric light, and beneath it a table and two stools. In one corner stood an old, much-worn bed-roll.

Seated on one of the stools was an old Chinese with gaunt face and hollow, feverish eyes. Deep in those burning eyes was stamped a look of overwhelming sorrow as of some hideous vice that gripped the soul.

By means of a push-button beneath the edge of the table, Ah Kee had opened the door; now, by the same method, he swung the door shut and locked it.

Bo Ch'at took the stool opposite Ah Kee.

"Rat of the dark!" he shrilled angrily. "It is long past the hour of midday rice, yet you have nothing ready. Is your head still full of opium?"

A flash of venomous hatred lighted Ah Kee's hollow eyes, but it passed quickly. "I am an old man!" he whimpered; "I am an old man!"

"Well, old man, I brought you something that will make you feel younger. To work now! We have much to do to-day."

Ah Kee sprang into life. From the floor by his feet he took a large, sealed can covered with many Chinese characters. Stamped across the face of the label were the English words: "Pickled meat—China."

With a can opener, Ah Kee cut out the entire top, and poured the contents of the can into a wooden tub that stood on the floor beside him. Then, using the can opener again, he removed a smaller can that had been soldered to the inside bottom.

Opening this smaller can, Ah Kee deftly removed a

glass jar, the crimson label of which bore many scrawly characters printed in black. On this label were three English words: "Morphine sulphate—Japan."

"Ah Kee," spoke up Bo Ch'at sharply, "do you know Lee Quan, the son of Lee, the worker in gold and jade?"

From a drawer in the table, Ah Kee took a set of druggist's scales. He began weighing out a quantity of the white, flaky drug.

"Only by sight do I know him, sir. He went to a foreign devil school and learned to paint pictures and do many other things. He wishes to marry Ah Chee, the daughter of Soo Wang; but his father will not pay the betrothal price. Indeed, he has forced Quan to leave his roof and earn his own rice. The youth only last night hired a room in *The House of Morning Twilight.*"

Bo Ch'at snorted.

"I might have known that you eat every scrap of gossip like a duck eats worms. Still, it is profitable sometimes to have one's stomach filled with knowledge.

"Well," Bo Ch'at lowered his voice, although in that underground den he could have screamed with no fear of being overheard; "I have work for you. Prepare two packages of the white drug. Take them to Lee Quan's room when you know he is out. Conceal them where he will not find them, but where they will be found by the Government officers."

From one of the strings suspended from the ceiling, Ah Kee removed a sausage. Untying the cord at one end, he dug out a portion of the meat. The morphine

he had weighed and wrapped in waxed paper he now concealed in this opening. Then a part of the meat was replaced, and the end tied shut again. Just as the cans of pickled meat that contained the smuggled morphine resembled the hundreds of other cans that came through the Custom-house, so these sausages looked just like any other sausages that went out of Bo Ch'at's shop.

"Well?" Bo Ch'at's voice held a sullen menace.

Ah Kee lifted fear-stricken eyes.

"Sir, I have always done your bidding. When you told me to put the white drug in the house of Wong Shim, I did it because he was of the family of Wong and nothing to me. He went to prison for many years and you got all his morphine business. But I cannot do this thing to Lee Quan. Have you forgotten that I, too, am of the family of Lee?"

"I had forgotten," scowled Bo Ch'at; "but what does it matter? The thing must be done. And you are going to do it!"

"I cannot do it," whimpered Ah Kee. "Although many generations removed from Lee Quan I have the same family name, and I cannot do such a thing to a blood cousin."

"Very well," concluded Bo Ch'at, rising. He took a small parcel from a pocket, looked at it, then concealed it again in the folds of his blouse. Ah Kee trembled, and licked his dry lips.

"When I decide to do a thing," went on Bo Ch'at, "I do it. Understand?" He caught the old man by the arm and twisted it cruelly. "You do as I say or

you get strung up again; and this time I'll lash you with leaded whips instead of bamboo. Hear me?"

"I hear, master!" Ah Kee was crying. His wasted body was shaking in a spasm of fear. "I hear, but I cannot do this thing to one of the family of Lee."

"Fool!" Bo Ch'at hurled the epithet in the old man's face. "What did the family of Lee ever do for you? Would they give you so much as half a card of opium? No, when you want *pin yen,* and you always want it, you have to come to me, don't you? Well, I'll teach you something!"

He dragged the old man to a corner and bound him with a rope that hung from a ring in the wall. Then, from the table drawer, he took an opium pipe, a long needle used in cooking opium, and a small opium lamp. He lighted the lamp.

"Now," said Bo Ch'at, "all you need is opium." From his blouse he took the small parcel and held it before Ah Kee's tortured eyes. "This is yours when you say you'll carry out my orders."

"I can't do it!" wailed Ah Kee. "I can't do it to one bearing the same family name!"

Bo Ch'at flung the package on the table.

"Tsau kom lok!" he shouted, and his voice rang like a heavy cleaver cutting through bone. "Hang there, you dried pig! Beg for opium until you chew your tongue out! Maybe I'll hear you; maybe I won't!"

Adjusting the lock so he could open the door from the outside, Bo Ch'at left the den and went up to his private office. When the shelf with the dust-laden

bundles had swung shut, he unlocked the door to the main office, called the book-keeper, then returned to his private desk.

"Leong," said Bo Ch'at, when the private door had been locked, "I want you to write a letter to the Government officers who watch secretly for the forbidden white drug. Write it in Chinese; they can have it translated. Be careful of fingerprints. Do not sign any name. Do not make any mark that may enable the officers to trace the letter to us.

"Tell the officers that in Room No. 5, in *The House of Morning Twilight,* No. 21, Canton Street, lives a man named Lee Quan. He is the biggest morphine peddler in town, tell them. If they search his room, they will find plenty of evidence."

The drug vendor drew out his gold watch.

"Mail the letter late to-night. The officers should have it in the morning, but not before. When Lee Quan goes out to his evening rice, the drug will be hidden in his room."

"Am I to do that also?" asked Leong, indifferently.

Bo Ch'at lifted his drooping eyes to his henchman's face.

"Certainly not! The matter will be attended to by Ah Kee as usual."

CHAPTER IV

"For when one takes counsel of his opium pipe——"

At four o'clock, which as anyone knows is the proper time to eat one's evening meal, Bo Ch'at's clerks closed the doors of the meat shop, drew the red shades, and set up the big round table. From the kitchen in the basement, the cook and his helpers brought great platters of steaming food, and a huge pot of *Crab's Eye* tea. At Bo Ch'at's place they set a jar of *ng ka py.*

Bo Ch'at, his mind taken up with his plot against Lee Quan, gulped down two small bowls of the strong millet liquor, and followed it with a bowl of hot egg-flower soup; then, leaving his clerks to chatter over their *chow mein,* their rice cakes and tea, the drug vendor went down to the secret room.

Ah Kee did not look up.

"Aih-yah!" Bo Ch'at shouted in the old man's face and shook him roughly. "Have you been so foolish as to let your spirit take leave of your body?"

Faintly, like the weird rattle of devil papers, a whisper came through the opium slave's lips.

"Pin yen. . . . master! *Pin yen!"*

"Oh!" chuckled Bo Ch'at; "you want opium, eh? Well, I'll get those two packages ready for you to put in Lee Quan's room. Meanwhile, you may have two pipes. Two pipes, mind you! No more until you come back!

"By *The Three Green Devils,* what a fool you are!" Bo Ch'at rattled on as he released the old man and let him fall to the floor. "I have made opium my slave; and it has brought me wealth and power. You have let the poppy drug become your master; and it has brought you poverty and misery."

Then, on the floor by Ah Kee's head, the drug vendor placed the opium pipe and the burning lamp. Opening the packages of opium, he thrust the flat end of the needle into the black, sticky substance, and twisted it until there adhered to the *yen hok* a "pill" about twice the size of a pea. He placed the cooking needle in Ah Kee's right hand.

Instantly, Ah Kee opened his eyes and turned on his side. Holding the opium over the flame, he watched eagerly while the little black ball sizzled and writhed in the heat. Before all the moisture had been evaporated, Ah Kee, unable to wait longer, placed the opium over the tiny vent in the pipe bowl, and pierced it through with the other end of the needle. Then, relaxing into a more comfortable position, he held the bowl over the flame.

Hungrily, Ah Kee's lips sought the mouthpiece. Slowly, in a long, sobbing breath, the opium slave inhaled until not a wisp of smoke remained in the drug. Then, his eyes closed, his muscles relaxed. Slowly, as though reluctant to part with the soothing vapour, the old man exhaled. Gray, filmy smoke was still curling about his mouth and nostrils when he began scraping the charred opium off the bowl and preparing for the second pipe.

Five minutes later Ah Kee stood by the door of the secret room; but now he stood erect, his deep black eyes gleaming like wet ebony.

"Remember!" cautioned Bo Ch'at. "If you are caught putting the drug in Lee Quan's room you will probably be killed. It would serve you right for being careless. Walk your way carefully. Return here as soon as you are done, for we must prepare for the usual night deliveries."

In the narrow doorway that opened into *The Alley of Lingering Shadows,* Ah Kee paused. Without moving his head, he glanced swiftly up and down the walks. It was growing late; shadows were deepening. A few white men had ventured into the alley, but Ah Kee quickly knew them as tourists. No one looking like a foreign devil official was in sight. Shoving his hands into the sleeves of his blouse, Ah Kee moved swiftly down the walk toward Canton Street.

Hardly had he gone a dozen steps when from out of a gloomy doorway at his side came a low, sharp call: "Ah Kee! Ah Kee!"

Instantly Ah Kee recognised the voice. Had the speaker been a Chinese he would have intoned the syllables "Ah" and "Kee" so as to give them the proper meaning—that is, *"Number Two."* But this was the harsh, toneless voice of a white foreign devil; it was one of the men to whom Ah Kee each night delivered a large quantity of morphine. Knowing that only some extreme urgency would bring the peddler down to Chinatown, Ah Kee turned into the doorway.

The drug peddler, a pallid, well-dressed youth, kept

his eyes on the alley. Out of the corner of his mouth he spoke cautiously:

"Listen, Kee! A pal of mine that makes the beach missed his connection. See? He's got to have something for his early trade. Gimme forty dollars' worth of M. Savvy?"

Ah Kee's opium-drugged mind was clinging tenaciously to its latest impression. He had but one thought: to put the morphine in Lee Quan's room and get back to his opium pipe.

"No can do," he replied, shaking his head and starting away. "I come see you bime-by."

The white man caught Ah Kee by the arm.

"See here! Don't gimme that 'no can do' talk! I gotta have that stuff for my friend now. You come see me as usual with my own stuff. See? But you gimme some M. for my friend. I can tell you got it on you by the way you were flat-footing it down the street. Give it to me; you can get more."

The dull light in the eyes of the opium slave flamed for an instant. The mind had received a new impression; instantly, everything else was forgotten.

"All light!" said Ah Kee. "Thass all light. This all I got. You gimme only twenty-five dollas."

He gave the peddler the two packages of morphine intended for Lee Quan's room. The peddler handed him the money, and left.

Again Ah Kee tucked his hands into the long sleeves of his blouse, and moved swiftly and silently down the alley; but he did not go to Canton Street. He turned in at a Chinese restaurant. The proprietor,

sitting at his counter just inside the door, recognised Ah Kee and moved his right knee just enough to press a hidden electric push-button. No bell rang, but in a certain room on the top floor, tiny electric lights flashed their signal.

Ah Kee stepped into a curtained booth; but he had no thought of food. Passing out of the booth by a secret door, he hurried up a deeply carpeted stairway. Before a small door built of heavy oak timbers stripped with pieces of sheet iron, Ah Kee paused and waited patiently. He knew that hidden wires beneath the carpet were flashing a warning to the guard on the other side of the oak door. He knew that although the proprietor downstairs had flashed a signal that a "safe" customer was on his way, nevertheless, the guard would take a look through some secret opening before he unlocked the door.

Presently the door swung open. Ah Kee glided in. Here was a narrow, windowless hall. Down the hall, only a dozen feet or so, was another door. Passing through this door, which the guard closed quickly, the odour of burning cinnamon assailed Ah Kee's nostrils.

Inside the den, Ah Kee paid no attention to the other habitués, yellow men and white, but made his way quickly to where the keeper sat on an ebony stool in one corner of the room. On another stool in front of him was an open suitcase. In this case were playing cards, a bowl of silver money, and a horn jar half full of opium.

Ah Kee put three silver dollars into the bowl. The keeper laid out a playing card and picked up his *hop toy*

of opium. With steady hand he poured a quantity of opium on the back of the card. Ah Kee took his card of opium and went to the nearest lay-out.

Then, while the moments slipped by rapidly, Ah Kee lay on a mat-covered bunk and smoked pill after pill of first-grade opium. Rest came to his clamouring nerves; peace quieted his feverish mind. Now and then, between pipes, he dozed; and in these brief moments of opium sleep, age and infirmities slipped away, and Ah Kee, young again, mounted on wings through heavens of rosy cloud-dreams.

But always there came a rude awakening. Out of the filmy smoke that writhed above his opium pipe would come a heavy saffron face with drooping eyes; and Ah Kee would start as though in a nightmare, and turn quickly to the solace of another pipe.

So, calling for more and more opium, Ah Kee smoked until his numb fingers could no longer hold the *yen hok* and his numb lips could no longer cling to the mouthpiece. Then, over the opium slave's weary soul descended the mantle of *The Great Peace,* that sleep that is like unto the sleep of the dead.

And who knows but that in this deathlike sleep Ah Kee's spirit did, in all truth ascend the dragon to *The Chambers of the Dead,* where those who are lost may take counsel with *The Evil One Who Knows All?* For when Ah Kee awoke, a crafy smile lingered on his lips; and in his heart burned the fire of an evil purpose.

CHAPTER V

"For now to my Balcony of Beauteous Night
My lover no more——"

It was a warm spring evening in Chinatown. By the third hour after evening rice, the streets and alleys were alive with a noisy, colourful throng. Men, smoking cigars, their hands in their pockets, or tucked into their long sleeves, strolled down the walks, followed by their obese wives in sombre black, trailing a group of chattering children. From the restaurants came the long-drawn wail of flageolets, broken at irregular intervals by the crash of cymbals. Above the walks, on balconies ornately carved and bright with splashes of crimson and imperial yellow, maidens sipped daintily at their *Felicitous Spring* tea, listened to the sound of merriment on the street below, and wished that they had been born men.

The balcony of Ah Chee's home was dimly lighted with coloured paper lanterns strung across the front of the building. At either end of the balcony, incense sticks emitted curling wisps of jasmine-scented smoke and dropped their white ash in the brazen censer bowl. Around the railing, blooming narcissi in quaint majolica pots shone white and ghostly in the dim light.

In the centre of the balcony stood a large lacquered bamboo table, with a cover of Cantonese embroidery.

Here on an ebony stool inlaid with mother-of-pearl, sat Ah Chee playing the *yung kum* that rested on the table, her jewelled fingers flashing in the light as she swung the tiny hammers.

Ah Chee's mandarin coat was of shimmering blue silk. Ornaments of gold and jade gleamed softly in her sleek black hair. On her lips was a single fine line of rouge; on her face a light dusting of perfumed rice powder. Sitting in the soft glow of the lanterns, she was a picture of rare and alluring beauty.

When she had struck the last of the quaint, high-pitched chords that concluded *The Ballad of the Unapproachable Maidens,* Ah Chee began singing, slowly and softly, something of her own composition, improvising the accompaniment on the dulcimer:

> "Dim grow my eyes with the waters of sorrow;
> Small grows my heart in the grip of fear;
> For now to my Balcony of Beauteous Night
> My lover no more——"

Suddenly, as though materialised from the air, a figure swung to the floor by Ah Chee's table. The girl checked a cry of fright, and sprang up.

"Lee Quan!"

"Good evening, Ah Chee!" said Lee Quan calmly. He drew a stool from beneath the table and sat down opposite the girl. He was a slender youth, becomingly dressed in American clothes. His dark eyes were quiet, thoughtful. *"Ts'ing tso!"* he went on, in musical Cantonese. "Please sit down."

Ah Chee broke off staring at Lee Quan, and looked around. Dangling from the cornice of the building, above the paper lanterns, were the two ends of a light, strong, silk rope. Yet the girl knew that Lee Quan could not have come from her father's roof, for Soo Wang, fearing thieves, had barred all approaches to the roof. So Ah Chee looked further.

Across an alley, some fifteen feet or more, stood a building whose roof was but slightly higher than Ah Chee's balcony. Lee Quan had stood on the edge of this roof, thrown the loop of his rope over the cornice, then swung across the dizzy gap to the balcony.

"Oh!" gasped Ah Chee. "You might have been killed!"

"Thank you!" said Lee Quan, bowing.

"And you must not stay! My father——"

"Is at the store inventorying his stock of *ng ka py*. Your mother and the servants have gone to the street. We are safe."

Lee Quan got out a cigarette, and lighted it.

"I came to tell you, Ah Chee, that you are to pawn your jewellery only as a last resort. I am sure I can raise the two thousand dollars demanded by your father as the price of your betrothal. In fact, only this afternoon I learned something that may enable me to earn the money in just a few days."

"Oh, how can you do that? So much money in so short a time!"

Lee Quan hesitated. In the dim light, Ah Chee could see his head bowed, but could not read the expression on his face.

"I think," said Lee Quan slowly, "that it would be better for me not to tell you that."

"Oh!"

There was a moment of awkward silence.

"But Lee Quan, listen!" exclaimed the girl suddenly. "To-day, Bo Ch'at came to see my father about me. Oh, how I hate that man! Every night I pray the Mother of Heaven that someone will split his head with one of his own cleavers, and that they will bury him where his bones will get wet and mildew.

"Well, I hid behind a screen and listened. It was very improper, but I don't care. I heard my father—*may his lucky star auspiciously shine*—my father told him that I was already betrothed to you. Bo Ch'at became very angry. He said a terrible thing about you. I know it isn't true, is it?"

"Of course not," smiled Lee Quan. "But what did that tub of old lard have to say about me?"

"He said that you earn your rice selling the forbidden white drug—morphine. He told my father that some day the Government officers will catch you and send you to jail. He said that in three days he will prove that you are one of these terrible drug peddlers. *Haie!* Bo Ch'at speaks lying words. *May devils pluck out his wicked tongue!*"

Lee Quan was strangely silent. Trying to read his face in the dim light, Ah Chee saw the red tip of his cigarette slowly and steadily creep toward his lips.

Presently Lee Quan spoke in English:

"Isn't it too bad, Ah Chee, that I am what the Americans call 'an educated Chink'? If I belonged to the old generation, my problem could be easily solved. Bo Ch'at is my enemy. For a trifling sum I could hire a professional knifeman to run a blade through Bo Ch'at. Exit—Bo Ch'at!

"But," Lee Quan shook his head with mock seriousness, "in complex, civilised America, killing one's enemy is not in good taste. It simply isn't done. So, I must watch, must find some other way to outwit my rival."

"You can do it!" declared Ah Chee. "You are just as clever as Bo Ch'at is wicked. But, Quan, you must be wary! My father suspects that Bo Ch'at will set a snare for your feet. He has sent Wing to watch Bo Ch'at; and he has sent Ah Lim to watch you."

"To watch me!" Lee Quan glanced quickly to the roof across the alley.

"Yes. And this evening Ah Lim reported that your father has driven you away from home, that you have taken a room on Canton Street. Ah, Quan, why did your father do that?"

Lee Quan tossed his cigarette stub over the railing, and lighted another.

"I do not blame my father, Ah Chee. He belongs to the old order, and does not understand. He offered to advance the money to start me in any business I would choose; and while I appreciated his offer, and told him so in the best way I knew, I cannot give up my painting. There is no race, and through all history there has been no race, with so keen an appreciation of

colour values as the Chinese. Does not the whole world bow to the marvellous colourwork of our old porcelains? Foreigners have spent their whole lives, studying, analysing, trying to explain the beauty, the mystery of the Chinese eye for delicate, elusive colours.

"So I told my old father politely, that since there is no sure road to riches I would follow the path I love —and he sent me away in anger. Ah, that reminds me!"

Lee Quan laid down his cigarette. From his inner coat pocket he took something wrapped in many folds of tissue paper, unwrapped it, and disclosed a small plaque of white Ningpo wood. He held it so that the light from the lanterns behind Ah Chee illumined the face of the wood.

On this plaque, in deft touches of colour, Lee Quan had painted a miniature of the bay as it appears from the hills of Chinatown. Above the blue water, white gulls wheeled in the sunshine. Beyond lay the Berkeley hills, green and peaceful.

"You know," said the artist, "how our old people long always for just one more glimpse of their native land before they close their eyes for the long sleep. Every spring, my father becomes almost ill thinking of the flowers blooming on the hills back of his old home in Kwantung. So I have painted this for him; and beneath it I have written this verse that——"

Out of the darkened hallway back of Ah Chee came a voice in sharp, guttural Cantonese:

"Daughter! Who is that man?"

"Haie-e!" cried Ah Chee, springing up. "My father!"

"Good night!" exclaimed Lee Quan, in flippant but emphatic English. He leaped up and started for his rope still hanging from the cornice. Then, abruptly, he stopped. Soo Wang, calling to his daughter, was shuffling rapidly down the hallway toward the balcony. Lee Quan knew he could escape; but there was no time to swing from the balcony to the roof before Soo Wang would see him. This would leave Ah Chee alone to face her father's anger.

There was only one way to get out of sight quickly. Lee took it. He dropped to his knees. With a great deal more agility than dignity, the Chinese artist crawled beneath the bamboo table.

Ah Chee turned with her back to the table, and waited. For once in her life she wished that she wore skirts. Her modest Chinese trousers did not offer much concealment for the man beneath the table.

Soo Wang emerged from the hallway into the light. He frowned at Ah Chee, then glanced quickly over her shoulder. "Oh!" he exclaimed: "It's you! What are you doing here?"

Ah Chee swung around. There, grinning and bowing as usual, was Ah Lim. Looking up, the girl saw that now two ropes hung from the cornice above the paper lanterns.

"Daughter," said Soo Wang, "you may go."

Ah Chee picked up her dulcimer and walked away from the table, walked slowly, for her heart had grown small with fear. Ah Lim must have been watching

from that roof all the time. Now Lee Quan was in a trap.

Ah Chee moved down the hallway, opened—and closed the door of her room. Then, stealthily, she went back to the heavy shadows by her balcony door, and waited.

CHAPTER VI

"White gleam the gulls across the darkling tide!"

Soo Wang took the stool his daughter had just left, and sat down.

"Ah Lim," he said, "you bow and scrape and grin like a Buddhist priest full of wine. Sit down! Moreover, much as I hate the odour of the thing, I'd rather you'd eat your smoke than burn my furniture."

"Yes, sire!" Ah Lim moved quickly to the table, took the stool Lee Quan had left, and sat down. Before him, its burning tip scorching the lacquered bamboo, was Lee Quan's cigarette where he had laid it when he got out the picture to show Ah Chee. Ah Lim picked it up, flicked off the ash with a jaunty flourish, and stuck the cigarette between his lips.

Neither man noticed Lee Quan's miniature.

"Well," said Soo Wang, "what are you doing here? Where is Lee Quan?" He bent over the table, his slender fingers combing his thin, gray beard.

"Lee Quan is in bed, sire." Beneath the table, Ah Lim dug the toe of his slipper in Lee Quan's ribs.

"How do you know?"

"Because, from a roof near the window of his room I watched him. He is in Room No. 5. For awhile he read the American bible and——"

"The American bible!" snorted Soo Wang. *"Kuai!* Isn't the religion of his ancestors good enough for him?"

"Yes, sire. As I was saying, when he finished his American bible he knelt before his ancestral tablets, and prayed long and earnestly; and then he sought his grass-seed pillow and went quickly to sleep." Again Ah Lim nudged Lee Quan with his slipper.

"And is that all you know?"

"No, sire. As I told you this evening, it was late before I learned that Lee Quan's father had forced him to leave home, and that he had taken a room at *The House of Morning Twilight*. Well, by the time I located the room, Lee Quan had gone out. I concealed myself in a doorway and waited for him to return."

"How did you know he was out?"

"Well, sire, *The House of Morning Twilight* is one of those inexpensive, home-like rooming houses where one never thinks of locking one's door. So, after I had waited awhile, I went down the hall and opened Lee Quan's door. Had he been there, I would have pretended that I had made a mistake. But he was not there.

"While I was waiting for Lee Quan to return, a very strange thing happened. Down the hall came an old man. At first I paid no attention to him, thought him one of the roomers; but when he passed Lee Quan's door the third time, I began to be suspicious.

"Finally, the old man tried the knob, then opened the door. Again he looked warily up and down the

hall, but he could not see me. He went in and closed the door.

"He was in there only about as long as it takes to change one's socks, then he came out and hurried down the hall and out of the building. As he passed me, I recognised him. It was old Ah Kee, the opium slave."

There was a moment of silence.

"What business," asked Soo Wang in a strange voice, "would an opium user have with Lee Quan?"

"I don't know. Maybe," chuckled Ah Lim, and again his foot found Lee Quan's ribs, "maybe Lee Quan hits the pipe himself; or, maybe he peddles opium and morphine, and——"

"Silence! You—you don't know—what you say!"

"Yes, sire."

"Leave me, Ah Lim! I must meditate!"

"Yes, sire; but have I done wrong?"

"No. Watch as usual. Now leave me."

"Yes, sire." Ah Lim bowed, and passed down the hallway.

For a long time Soo Wang sat like one stupid with opium. He did not seem to hear the shuffling feet, the chatter of voices in the street below, the muffled wail of flageolets in the restaurant across the way.

"By *The All-knowing One,* it must be true!" he groaned aloud. "And my *Thousand of Gold*—loves him!"

He bowed his head; and his hands, groping across the table, came in contact with a plaque of wood.

Curious, Soo Wang sat up, and held the object to the light.

For a long time the old man gazed at the picture—the blue water, the white gulls wheeling in the sunshine, the hills green and peaceful. Then, slowly, reverently, the words of Lee Quan's poem fell from the old man's lips like the weirdly musical chant of some priest of the Orient:

> "Rain-water laughs, running to join the brook
> In the sunshine, birds gleam.
> Hills are green; brightly they shine with flowers.
> *Aih-yah!* Oh, how piteous!
> For this is spring again; and I
> An exile . . . .
> *A thousand, thousand li from home!*"

With the last words, Soo Wang's voice quavered and broke. He struggled to his feet. His head bowed, his trembling hands pressing the miniature to his breast, Soo Wang stumbled blindly down the hallway to his room. . . .

Lee Quan had wrapped the silk rope about his wrists and was ready to swing across the alley to the roof, when he heard a step on the balcony behind him. It was Ah Chee.

"Oh, Quan, I heard everything! What does it mean? Is it a trap for your feet?"

"Have no worry, Little One," Lee Quan spoke kindly. "The *Eye of Heaven* sees all human actions; therefore, what is evil cannot long prevail. And I

have been thinking! It is nothing strange that Bo Ch'at should want me out of the way; the queer thing is the method he has chosen. He charges me with selling morphine. Morphine! What made him think of that?"

CHAPTER VII

"If you hit a tiger and do not kill him——"

It was growing dark when Ah Kee left the opium den and shuffled down Canton Street, his head up, his eyes burning. He knew from bitter experience that it would be folly to try to escape from Bo Ch'at. For a time he might bury himself in Chinatown's secret haunts, or in some den up the river; but it would not be for long. Bo Ch'at's spies were everywhere, his vengeance swift and terrible.

At the junction of Canton Street and Shrimp Alley, Ah Kee entered a Chinese drug store. If his purchase aroused any curiosity, the clerk did not betray it by asking questions. He wrapped the two parcels. Ah Kee paid for them, and left.

A moment later, Ah Kee entered *The House of Morning Twilight,* and made his way up to Room No. 5. In less than five minutes he was on the street again.

Leaving Canton Street, Ah Kee turned down *The Alley of Lingering Shadows* and into the rear entrance of Bo Ch'at's meat-market. Without a word he passed the book-keeper and made his way down to the secret room. Bo Ch'at was not there, for which Ah Kee was thankful.

Ah Kee knew what to do, and he lost no time getting at it.

He was weighing out morphine when Bo Ch'at's rap sounded on the door, the sharp, swift *rat-a-tat* of long nails. Trembling in spite of his determination, Ah Kee opened the door.

A long time Bo Ch'at studied Ah Kee's face.

"Spawn of a turtle! Where have you been? What have you been doing? What kept you so long?"

"I was not gone so long, master. I returned, and have been working. I——"

Ah Kee's voice wavered and broke. He could not face the baleful glitter in Bo Ch'at's drooping eyes.

"You lie, Ah Kee. I waited long, then went to seek you. I saw you just as you left *The House of Morning Twilight*. I followed you here. Do you mean to tell me you were all afternoon trying to get into Lee Quan's room?"

"Just that, master. For Lee Quan was in his room. He did not go out to evening rice until late."

"And when he did go——"

Ah Kee looked up, looked into Bo Ch'at's sullen eyes.

"When he did go, I put two packages of white drug in his room."

"Your word," said Bo Ch'at after a long silence, "is not worth a *candarin;* but I hope you're not lying now. If you are, I shall find it out; and then——"

Thumb to thumb, Bo Ch'at held his powerful hands before the old man's face, then clutched quickly at some imaginary object and tore it asunder.

Ah Kee shuddered; but now his eyes were meeting Bo Ch'at's watchfully, half-defiantly.

"What is the matter with you?" demanded the drug vendor suddenly. "You act as if you have had more opium."

"I have not," Ah Kee lied calmly. "I want more. You promised it."

"I forgot to bring it," said Bo Ch'at easily. "I'll bring it to-night. Now get to work."

He took a package from beneath his blouse, unwrapped it, and set it on the table.

"You tell me that my customers still complain that I cheat them on weight." Bo Ch'at laughed. "Just as if they expected anyone in this miserable business to be honourable! Well, give them correct weight for a while; but adulterate it with this. It is sugar of milk, a foreign devil drug. Put in plenty. It is harmless. What is more important, it is very cheap. Ha! That way we cheat the fools even more, but they don't know it."

Ah Kee took the morphine off the scales and dumped it on a large sheet of paper. To this drug he added a liberal quantity of the sugar of milk. When he had mixed it thoroughly, he began his weighing.

In a half-hour Ah Kee had finished. On the table lay a large number of packages wrapped in butcher's paper. Each package contained a number of ordinary Chinese sausages. Four sausages in each package contained morphine in waxed paper.

Ah Kee took one of the packages and went upstairs. He strolled casually through the shop, spoke to sev-

eral of the clerks, then walked out the front door and turned down the street. Under his arm, in plain sight, was the package of sausage.

Two plain-clothes officers of the Chinatown police squad, standing at the corner, glanced at Ah Kee, saw the package, and gave him no further thought. Why suspect a Chinaman carrying home meat for his morning meal?

Ah Kee took a cable car up the hill, transferred to a cross-town line, and alighted in one of the fashionable apartment sections. At one of these apartment houses he rang the bell—a short, a long, and a quick short again. The door opened presently and a white man with pale face and sleek black hair stepped out, nodded curtly to Ah Kee, and accepted the package. As he did so, he slipped something into Ah Kee's hand. Ah Kee took a quick glance, saw that it was two twenties and a ten, and deftly palmed the fifty dollars.

Twenty minutes later, Ah Kee was again in the secret room with Bo Ch'at. He gave Bo Ch'at the money, and left with another package of "sausage."

By the time Bo Ch'at was ready to close the store—nine o'clock was the usual hour—all the packages had been delivered.

"The wise man," chuckled Bo Ch'at, when he had finished counting the night's profits, "is the one who can make profit out of the mistakes of others."

"That is true," Ah Kee spoke up boldly. "And who has made a greater mistake than I?"

"What do you mean?" demanded Bo Ch'at, a surprised look in his widened eyes.

"For years I have been a slave," replied Ah Kee, his voice still deep with the sleepy rumble of the confirmed opium addict. "I have been a slave of opium; but I have been in even greater slavery to you. Opium has given me many hours of almost unendurable happiness; you have given me only abuse. You have made me take all the chances in this drug traffic; for yourself you have kept all the profits."

"By *The Three Green Devils!*" laughed Bo Ch'at. "Well said! I didn't know you had it in you. Ah-ha! It is as I thought. You have had more opium! It is not you who talks so boldly and cleverly; it is the demon of the drug. Well, where did you get it?"

Ah Kee, suddenly frightened at his own boldness, did not answer.

"And *how* did you get it?" went on Bo Ch'at. "By what trick did you get money to buy opium? Answer me!"

But he did not wait for Ah Kee to answer. He caught him by the throat, backed him against the wall, searched his clothes, and drew forth a sum of money. It was the balance of the money Ah Kee received from the sale of the morphine intended for Lee Quan's room. Bo Ch'at looked at it a moment, then put it in his own pocket.

"So! There is some trick! I give you two packages of morphine to put in Lee Quan's room. You come back with your pockets full of money and your head full of opium. Wait!" With his open hand he struck

the old man in the mouth. "Don't speak until you are ready to tell the truth."

"It is the truth, master. I put two packages of white drug in Lee Quan's room."

"Then where did you get this money?"

"A friend—owed it to me."

Swiftly, Bo Ch'at struck the old man again. He staggered, fell. Bo Ch'at bent over him.

"Lies! Lies! Truth and opium are never found in the same head. To-morrow I will know the truth. The officials will search Lee Quan's room. What they find, I shall know quickly. And if you have tricked me—may *The Evil One* help you!"

When the door had closed behind Bo Ch'at, Ah Kee arose and staggered to the table. There he sat down—and waited.

An hour later, when he was sure that every one had left the store, Ah Kee made his way upstairs, then down by the regular stairway to the basement kitchen. There he lighted the gas and heated a bowl of soup, his only food for the day. He had had enough opium for the hot soup to bring on a pleasant sense of drowsiness.

Returning to the main floor, Ah Kee searched around the shop until he found what he wanted, then went down to the secret room. Moving like one following a carefully thought out plan, he got a few cords from the table drawer, then crawled beneath the table. When his task was finished, he took the bed-roll from the corner, spread it on the floor, and prepared for bed.

About to turn out the light, he decided to take a last look beneath the table.

Fastened with cords to the table frame, where Bo Ch'at would not see it, but where Ah Kee could grasp it quickly, was a heavy, keen-edged cleaver.

CHAPTER VIII

"Prince We'ng, frightened by a harmless serpent, left the straight path to go around—and a tiger ate him!"

At half-past eight, Harry Brown, narcotic agent-in-charge, threw aside the morning paper to take the mail brought him by a clerk. Among the other letters, this morning, he found a cheap white envelope bearing his name and address in a wretchedly scrawled hand. At first he thought the envelope contained a piece of cloth, but it proved to be a folded sheet of rice paper. On this paper were several columns of Chinese characters.

"Ellwood"—Brown addressed his confidential inspector—"step downstairs and ask Wong to come up a minute."

Wong was a post-office clerk in charge of the Chinese mail. He was in the confidence of many government officials. So far as any one ever knew, he had kept his trust.

"Wong," said Brown, when Ellwood and the Chinese entered, "here's another batch of hen-tracks for you. For heaven's sake, why don't the Chinese learn to write English?"

"Aw, English too old-fashioned and difficult," retorted Wong, smiling. "Chinese writing is like Amer-

ican shorthand—phonetic, composed of sounds and syllables. It's short, simple, rapid. Why, I know a man on *The Examiner* who makes all his notes in Chinese, keeps his telephone numbers in Chinese so his wife can't read them. It's the oldest and best shorthand system known. Any intelligent person——"

Abruptly, Wong dropped his good-natured persiflage. His lips hardened, his dark eyes grew wide. "Mr. Brown," he said quietly, "this letter says that you will find morphine in Room No. 5, occupied by Lee Quan, a drug peddler, at No. 21, Canton Street."

"I supposed it was something like that. Do you know this Lee Quan?"

"I know of him. He paints pictures. His father is a worker in gold and jade, and very wealthy. I don't see why Lee Quan should have to sell morphine for a living. Personally, I think this letter is a malicious lie; but I don't want to influence you. If Lee Quan is bringing disgrace on our people by dealing in these terrible drugs, then go get him!"

"Any clue there as to who wrote the letter?" asked Brown.

Wong shook his head. "Ordinary rice paper. You'll find it everywhere among the Chinese. The writing was done most likely by a merchant or his clerk. This is not the classic style used in books and written by scholars; it is the running script adopted for business correspondence."

"That doesn't help much," concluded Brown. "Well, we'll see about it. Much obliged, Wong."

"Somebody in Chinatown is wholesaling a lot of

white stuff," spoke up Inspector Ellwood. "We know it, but we've never been able to run it down. Maybe this will give us a lead."

From his force who could be taken from their other cases, Brown selected five men who had had experience in Chinatown. Brown intended to lead the investigation himself, making six. Chinatown had been found to be such a maze of hidden avenues of escape that it took no less than six men to make sure that nothing got away during the raid, and then they were never sure.

Shortly after nine they left the Custom-house, singly and by separate exits. Brown noticed an unusual number of Chinese loitering in the hall-ways, but he did not pause to investigate. Each man taking a different route, the squad strolled casually into Chinatown.

Two men circled around to the rear of No. 21, Canton Street, and took up stations where they could watch the rear doors and the back roofs. Two others did the same at the front of the building. Brown and Ellwood went quickly and quietly up the stairs to Room No. 5.

Brown tried the door, found it unlocked, and went in. Inspector Ellwood followed, closed the door again and stood with his back to it. He folded his arms with an assumption of lazy indifference, but his right hand rested on the pistol in his shoulder holster.

It was a small room, plainly but neatly furnished. In addition to the usual furniture of a hotel room, there was a large table covered with books, paints,

oils, brushes and similar material all orderly arranged. The walls were hung with small paintings. The one window was open, disclosing a gravel roof some six or eight feet from the sill—an excellent get-away, Brown thought.

Standing by the window, before an easel, was a young Chinese dressed in American clothes. As the officers entered, he turned to them and smiled.

"Good morning, gentlemen! What can I do for you?"

Brown showed his badge.

"We're federal agents. Want to take a look-see. What's your name?"

"Lee Quan."

Rapidly, Brown ran a practised hand over Lee Quan's clothes.

"He's clean," Brown announced; by which Ellwood knew that the Chinaman carried no weapons. Ellwood unfolded his arms.

"Sit down, Lee," Brown ordered. "We won't disturb you or your things."

Lee Quan obeyed.

"Evidently some one has informed on me," he told Brown. "May I ask who it was?"

"I don't know," replied Brown truthfully. "I wouldn't tell you if I did. We can't give out such information. I can tell you, however, that some one has tipped you off. Maybe you know who it was?"

Brown knew that very often anonymous tips came from drug peddlers eager to see a competitor put out of business. By setting one against the other, he had

frequently been able to round up the whole nest. Lee Quan, however, did not seem disposed to talk.

After a casual examination of the room, including an inventory of everything found in Lee Quan's pockets, Brown, with Ellwood's assistance, settled down to a systematic search. The walls, the ceiling and the floor were carefully gone over for secret panels and doors. The table, the chair, and the painting easel were examined. Brown went through the books, flipped the pages of Egan Mew's "Monograph on Old Chinese Porcelains," looked into Petrucii's "Chinese Painters," and gave it up. There was not a thing to indicate in any way that this man was engaged in the illicit drug traffic.

Agent Brown faced Lee Quan and spoke sharply:

"See here, Lee! We got the goods on you. We know you've been peddling morphine. My men have seen you sell to dope users. We know you have morphine right here in this room. If you want to open up and get off easy, now's the chance. Otherwise we'll find the stuff if we have to rip the whole house to splinters."

Lee Quan smiled.

"I won't be angry, Mr. Brown. I suppose in your business you have to bluff and threaten. In this particular case, perhaps I can help you. If you will be so kind as——"

A sudden commotion outside the door drowned Lee Quan's words. Ellwood opened the door. Inspector Edwards strode in, dragging an angry and much frightened Chinese.

"Shut up, you!" Edwards ordered, shaking his prisoner. "I'll do all the talking necessary just now." He turned to Brown. "Found this Chink in the hall. There's a lot of excitement in Chinatown over something. Bunches of them standing around in front of them red bulletin boards reading their puzzle pictures and jabbering. Thought I'd come up and see how things were going. This guy acted suspiciously, and I gave him a frisk. Here's what I found: two packages of morphine."

He flung the opened parcels on the table. They had been wrapped in green paper and tied with green string. Each package was about twice the size of an ordinary pill-box and contained a white, flaky substance.

Brown picked up one of the papers, touched the tip of his tongue to the drug.

"Morphine sulphate," he said tersely. He turned to Edwards' prisoner. "Who are you?"

"I am Ah Lim. I——"

Lee Quan cut in quickly with something in Cantonese. Then he addressed Brown:

"This looks bad, and I see my mistake. In trying to get out of a snare I have fallen into a deeper pit. Let me explain that this is my friend, Ah Lim. Ah Lim, will you please tell these officers what you saw yesterday?"

Ah Lim bobbed his head and once more managed to grin. Rapidly, in fair English, he told how Soo Wang had sent him to watch Lee Quan, and how he had seen Ah Kee sneak into Lee Quan's room.

"Who's Ah Kee?" interrupted Brown.

"I know him, chief," spoke up Ellwood. "He's a hop-head. Works in some butcher shop. More'n likely he came up here to make a buy, eh?"

"Certainly," agreed Brown. "Lee Quan, do you think I'm foolish enough to swallow that story? You're selling dope. Ah Kee came up here to buy. This man, Ah Lim, was delivering stuff for you, or maybe he was delivering from a smuggler to you. Ah Lim, where did you get this morphine?"

"From Lee Quan."

"Ah! Then you were delivering for him. Where——"

"No," interrupted Ah Lim, "I was keeping this for him until he called for it."

"Until after we got through searching, eh? Clever! Well, this is getting interesting. We'll just flop here awhile and see who calls on Mr. Lee Quan."

"Gentlemen, please let me explain," begged Lee Quan, his face grave. "This is a plot. Ah Lim told me he had seen Ah Kee enter my room. I became suspicious. I searched carefully, and found those two packages.

"I knew it was a trap. I knew that whoever had Ah Kee put that stuff in my room would tell you officers that it was here. So I waited for you. But I wanted to explain everything, then give you the morphine. That's why I gave it to Ah Lim to keep for me. It never occurred to me that you would find him in the hall and search him."

Brown and his men exchanged glances, and shook their heads. This surely was a puzzler.

"Lee Quan," said Brown, "I'll have to place you and Ah Lim under arrest until I can investigate your story. Frankly, I don't know whether you're lying or not; but it ought not to take long to find out."

He turned to his men.

"Ellwood, take Ah Lim to my office. I'll follow in a minute. Try to avoid attracting attention in Chinatown. If Ah Lim tries to speak to any one, choke him off quickly. Edwards, go out back and tell Westing to stick. Tell Mason to follow you to this room. Who else knows this Ah Kee, Ellwood?"

"Summers knows him. I left him down in front."

"Good. As you go out with Ah Lim, tell Summers to scout around and see if he can pick up Ah Kee. Tell him if he gets him to bring him right down to my office."

Ellwood and Ah Lim left at once, going down the front stairs. Edwards went out the back way.

"Mr. Brown," said Lee Quan, the moment they were alone, "I hope there won't be any disagreeable publicity about my arrest. I——"

Brown's eyes struck fire.

"Lee Quan, I don't give a damn what you hope. A drug peddler is the lowest criminal unhung. If you're a drug peddler, then you know what I think of you. Publicity? Why, if I had my way the only publicity a dope peddler would get is a funeral notice."

Edwards returned, followed by Inspector Mason.

"You two stay here," Brown directed. "Keep quiet.

Nab every person who comes to that door. No matter what they say, don't turn any one loose until I can question them. You understand. Well, come on, Lee!"

They passed out, and turned down the hall. When they reached the street, Agent Brown looked at his watch. It was ten o'clock.

CHAPTER IX

"Loving hearts find peace in love;
Clever heads make profit out of it!"

THE morning sun, creeping slowly above the tin and gravel roofs of Chinatown, struck in a splash of gold on the big window of Soo Wang's sleeping room. Inside the room, a beam of golden light, narrowed by the heavy curtains that draped the window, moved down the wall and seemed to linger reverently on the gilt and crimson scroll that hung above the foot of Soo Wang's bed. As Soo Wang's eyes opened on the scroll, his lips framed in musical cadences the *Four Cardinal Teachings* of Confucius:—

Culture.
Conduct.
Faithfulness.
Truth.

Then, as the old merchant intoned the final word, his eyes closed again; for, as any one knows, reading without meditation is vain.

Thus, Ah Chee found him. Entering quietly, her padded slippers sinking deep into the century-old Cantonese rug, the girl looked fondly at her father for a moment; then, thinking him asleep, she took from its hook on the wall a lyre-shaped fan of peacock

feathers. Very gently, she trailed the feathers across her father's face.

"*Ah-che-e-e-e!*"

"Yes, father." Quickly the girl hid her smile behind her fan.

"Mischievous kitten! You know very well I didn't speak your name. I sneezed. *Aih!* One can never rest with women about the house. What was it the wise Kung Fu Tse said: 'Where the hen announces the morning——' "

"But, father, I did not come to announce the morning, which is almost gone, but to announce a caller who is still here. It is Mr. Sutherland, the white man, who attends to all your Custom-house papers. He says the matter is very important."

"Important! Is my rest of no importance? *Aih,* these Americans surely have strange ways. Instead of attending to business until nine o'clock at night as any one should, they close their shops and offices at five and spend their evenings in frivolous amusements; then in the morning when a gentleman should rest and read and meditate, they rise early and strut about and cry: 'Business! Business! Business!' Well, ask him what it is about. No, hold! I must bathe and have my morning rice. Tell him to return in two hours."

Ah Chee left, but came back quickly. "Father, the white man says that the matter cannot wait two hours. He must see you at once, or you will lose a chance to make a nice profit."

Soo Wang sat up.

"*Haie!* Why didn't you say so? Why stand there and waste my time chirruping like a silly cicada? Go tell the white man I will see him in my study in ten minutes. No, wait! Fetch me my morning meal! No, fetch the American first! Then bring me dragon-eye fruit, almond cakes and Souchong. But first bring me some almond tea, for your noisy chattering has given me a headache. No, on reflection, you may bring me *ng ka py* as usual."

Ah Chee carried the message to the visitor, then returned with a small-necked brown stone jar covered with queer labels. She found her father seated at the teakwood table by the window. He had donned a robe of black silk embroidered with gold and wistaria, and a study cap of black silk with a red button.

Into a tiny Swatow bowl, thin as an egg shell, Ah Chee poured a quantity of the amber liquor from the jar and set it before her father. Soo Wang sipped it slowly, for the *ng ka py* was raw and fiery, and with much noisy smacking of the lips, which, as any one knows, is the proper way to show one's appreciation of good tea or liquor. When but a few drops remained, Soo Wang drained the bowl into the palm of his hand; then, throwing back the sleeve of his robe, he rubbed *ng ka py* brickly over his right elbow where his rheumatism afflicted him most often.

The broker was brought in, a young man with alert eye and brisk step. He took the stool opposite the rich merchant. Soo Wang told his daughter to remain. He needed her, of course, to interpret. Breakfast? That could wait!

"Tell Mr. Soo," began the broker, "that all the morning papers carry a Washington dispatch stating that the Prohibition Commissioner has issued an order forbidding any further importation of *ng ka py*. I have just come from the Custom-house. The dispatch is true. This morning the local Customs office received a night-letter from Washington instructing them to refuse all further requests for *ng ka py*."

There was considerable talk between Ah Chee and her father. Then:

"Why have they done that?" asked Ah Chee. "*Ng ka py* is a medicine; it is not a liquor. The Chinese have used it for centuries. You have never seen a drunken Chinese, have you? Why does your Prohibition Commissioner now say the Chinese can have no more of this old medicine?"

"I guess he wants to be on the safe side. It is true that one never sees a drunken Chinese. But chemists have analysed *ng ka py* for the Government and found that it contains over fifty per cent. alcohol, and can be used as a beverage."

"That may be true," argued Ah Chee, after a talk with her father; "but it also contains medicine. The Chinese take the spirits obtained by distilling millet and infuse in it nine different herbs. There is *gee tsz, hong hai pei, ning gong*——"

"I admit all that," interrupted Sutherland, smiling. "I know the stuff tastes like a last year's bird's nest and smells to high heaven. I know that a white man in his right mind won't drink the stuff. I tried it

once. I had to hold my nose to keep from smelling it; and when I let go my nose, the stuff came back up. However, I'm not making this rule. I'm merely telling you what's what. It's done, and you can't get around it."

"May we use what stock we have on hand?"

"Yes. And that's why I wanted to see you at once. As soon as this order becomes generally known, and there is considerable excitement on the street already, the price of *ng ka py* will go up like a rocket. It is forty dollars a case now; it will be a hundred within thirty days. Hang on to what you have for a higher price."

All this Ah Chee related to her father. Soo Wang appeared much excited. There was a long exchange of rapid Cantonese. When Soo Wang finished, he was pounding the table with both fists and spluttering in a most undignified manner.

"My father says to tell you that some one has tricked him," Ah Chee announced calmly. "Yesterday afternoon he sold his entire stock of *ng ka py*."

"What! Who bought it?"

"A broker named Gerhart."

Sutherland stared. "I don't understand that. I know positively that Gerhart had no inkling of this new order yesterday. He was as much surprised this morning as the rest of us. How much did he pay a case?"

"He didn't buy it outright. He paid five hundred dollars cash for an option tying up father's entire stock

of *ng ka py* for thirty days. He offered such a good price per case that father, thinking he could readily withdraw more from the Customs warehouse, signed the option."

"Looks queer, Miss Soo! Ask your father if I may see that option."

Soo Wang, in answer to Ah Chee, shouted something in angry Cantonese and waved toward the store. Ah Chee left. When she returned she handed Sutherland a folded paper.

"The man who tied your father up with this will make a nice fortune overnight," said the broker. "I'd like to know how he knew about this order; for unless he knew of it he wouldn't be likely to load on so much stuff as your father has in stock. Well, this looks like Gerhart's signature. And here! What's this, Miss Soo? Probably the name of the principal, but it's written in Chinese the same as Soo Wang's."

Ah Chee took the paper, glanced at it, and an astounded expression swept over her face. Slowly, she laid the paper on the desk beneath her father's eyes.

Soo Wang put a finger on the Chinese characters at the bottom of the option, and shouted:

"Lee Quan!"

"Who is Lee Quan?" asked Sutherland.

"He is just a young man, but he is very bright," replied Ah Chee, her eyes shining.

"I'll say he's bright, all right!" laughed the broker. "He'll make a barrel of money. What business is he in?"

"He is not in business. He is an artist."

"An artist! What does an artist want with all this *ng ka py?* Has he ever bought any from you before?"

"Father says he has not, but there isn't anything dishonest about this, is there?"

"Not in the least. It's a square business proposition. Wish I was in on it myself. But the funny thing is this: how did it happen that Lee Quan goes to the biggest importer in Chinatown only a few hours before this prohibitory order and ties up Soo Wang's entire stock?"

"I'm sure I don't know, sir; but Mr. Lee has many influential friends among the Americans. Everybody likes him. Some day he will be a very famous Chinese painter. But father is asking if there is any way he can break this contract?"

Sutherland's reply was emphatic.

"Not a chance! Lee Quan has your father tied hand and foot!"

. . . . . .

Twenty minutes later, Soo Wang, too disturbed to eat, gulped several bowls of steaming hot tea, put on his street slippers, and exchanged his study cap for one of plain black.

"Daughter," he said, "many a trapped animal has escaped by leaving its gnawed-off foot in the steel. Well, I am going to *The House of Morning Twilight* to see Lee Quan. I shall ask his price to release me from this hateful paper. With good luck I may yet save my face as a maker of bargains."

"Lee Quan is very young and knows nothing of.

business," Ah Chee taunted him, laughing. "You should——"

But Soo Wang had gone, slamming the door behind him. Ah Chee, knowing she would have to remain in the store until her father returned, drew back her sleeve and looked at her watch. It was ten o'clock.

CHAPTER X

"Life flickers like a wick!
A passing breath blows all our joys away!"

THE gilded hands of the clock in the window of *The Celestial Brightness Jewellery Store* were pointing to half-past ten, when an elderly Chinese turned in at No. 21, Canton Street, and with a steady, dignified step, mounted the stairs to *The House of Morning Twilight*. On these bare stairs, clean but unpainted, the man stood out in sharp contrast. His jacket was of the finest satin. The glasses that set off his strong, intellectual countenance were rimmed with gold. His padded slippers were heavily figured with silk.

At the landing, the man paused and looked around, his long fingers toying nervously with the polished handle of his cane. Then with head up, he moved quietly down the hall and rapped at the door of No. 5.

The door opened, a hand flashed out. It caught the man by the wrist and jerked him unceremoniously into the room. Another hand, rough and heavy, closed over his mouth, choking his startled cry.

One of the white men showed a badge. The Chinese continued to struggle, for it was well known that thieves often tricked their victims by pretending to be officers. Moreover, one of the white men was searching the old man's pockets.

"He's clean!" whispered Edwards, taking away the cane.

The other officer released his prisoner; and, instantly, the Chinese raised his voice in a shrill cry for help. Edwards clapped his hand over the man's mouth. "Shut up!" he hissed in the man's ear. "We're officers; we won't hurt you!" But the Chinese, not understanding a word of English, continued to struggle. Since there was nothing else to do, the officers handcuffed him, gagged him, and shoved him into a chair.

"Well!" breathed Inspector Mason. "Wonder who this old bird is? Don't look like a hop. Maybe a peddler, but I'd never think it. Doesn't seem to understand English."

"Can't tell about that," argued Edwards. "That's an old trick. Whenever a Chinaman doesn't want to talk, he falls back on that old 'no savvy.' And that's all——"

Edwards broke off, and raised a warning hand. There was a step in the hall; then a gentle, hesitant rap on the door.

Before the rap had ended, Edwards opened the door, struck out swiftly, and caught the upraised wrist in a grip of steel. A quick jerk, and he had his prisoner in the room. His big hand choked off a frightened scream.

"Oh, the devil!" exclaimed Edwards in disgust. "It's a girl!"

Inspector Mason closed the door.

"Be still!" Edwards whispered to the struggling girl. "We're officers. Do you understand English?"

The girl managed to nod.

"Then be quiet and I'll release you. Understand?"

The girl managed another nod. Edwards released her.

"What is the matter?" the girl demanded excitedly, tears springing to her eyes. Then, as she caught sight of the old man, gagged and handcuffed, she uttered a cry of mingled pity and dismay.

"Not so loud!" cautioned Edwards. "Listen to me a moment! Who are you?"

"I am Ah Sen."

"Where do you live?"

"In Oakland."

"Do you know Lee Quan, the man who occupies this room?"

"Yes, sir."

"What business have you with him?"

"I sell his paintings for him."

"Sure you don't sell morphine for him?"

"Morphine? I don't understand you."

Mason whispered in Edwards' ear. "That doesn't sound right. You know well enough that a Chinese girl would have to have more reason than selling pictures before she would go to a man's room like this. Chinese girls don't do such things. She's pretty much upset about something."

"Well, what are you going to do?" returned Edwards. "We can't search her. And talking is just a waste of time. We'll just have to wait until we can take her down to the office and have Miss Watkins look her over if the chief thinks it necessary."

He turned to the girl. With a nod he indicated their other prisoner.

"Do you know this man?"

"Yes, sir. His name is Lee Fong. He is the father of Lee Quan."

"Ah! What do you know about him?"

"He is an honourable merchant. He has never dealt in morphine or opium."

"Well, he put up quite a fight when he came in. Explain to him that we are Government officers. Tell him if he will behave himself, we'll remove the gag and handcuffs."

This was done. And the instant the gag was removed, Lee Fong poured out a volley of high-pitched gutturals.

"He says that he mistook you for thieves," interpreted the girl. "He wants to know why you are in his son's rooms?"

Before Edwards could reply, Inspector Mason drew him aside.

"Have a heart now, Edwards," he whispered. "I've been studying that girl and the old man. She's a classy dresser and a swell looker; and so is he. I think they are all right. Maybe Lee Quan is mixed up in this dirty drug business, and maybe he isn't. I wouldn't tell the old man or the girl about it—yet."

Edwards shook his head. "You're too easy. I think we should throw a scare into them. Tell them Lee Quan has confessed and implicated them. See?"

"Sure, I know the game; but I wouldn't do it—yet. Better wait until the chief comes. Just listen to that jabber!"

Lee Quan's father and the girl were whispering in their native tongue.

"Why are these men here?" demanded Lee Fong. "Is my boy in trouble?"

"No, sir. He is helping these men lay a trap for thieves."

"But didn't you say they were Government officers?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then I do not understand. What have Government officers to do with thieves? I thought the *suey quan hou* searched only for smuggled opium and other drugs."

"Yes, now that you speak of it, I know that is true. Perhaps the thieves have stolen smuggled opium."

Lee Fong shook his head slowly. "I do not understand. Why should these men lie in wait in my son's room for thieves who have stolen smuggled opium? *Aih-yah!* I should never have sent my boy away from home."

From the long sleeve of his blouse the old father took a large handkerchief of yellow silk. For a time he sat with bowed head, the handkerchief over his eyes. Then he looked up at the girl. She was regarding him curiously.

"Tell me, daughter, what is your lofty family name?"

The girl bowed her head respectfully. "I am of the

insignificant family of Cheong," she said. "My despicable given name is Sen."

"Cheong Sen, what is your honourable father's business?"

"He is a dealer in antiques, sir."

Lee Fong appeared to meditate for a moment.

"And, may I ask, what brings the daughter of Cheong to the room of my son?"

"I made a mistake," replied the girl easily. "I came to visit my cousin who has a room in this house. I came to the wrong door."

"Then you do not even know my son?"

The girl shook her head.

Lee Fong breathed a huge sigh of relief. He nodded his head many times; then he spoke as much to himself as to the girl.

"My son is an upright boy. Never has he given his parents a moment's concern. He is a painter of pictures. See! All these on the walls are his work. Are they not beautiful?"

"Indeed, they are beautiful," the girl replied quickly.

"Yes—beautiful. And you, too, Ah Sen," the old man went on like a father speaking to his daughter—"you too, are beautiful. And you talk with the tongue of one who has learning. What is more important, you use a respectful tone with your elders. Ah——" He shook his head sadly, but did not finish his sentence.

"Ah, how true the words of Kung Fu Tse!" mused Lee Fong aloud, after another long silence. " 'Misery

and unhappiness of themselves have no door of access to our hearts, but man invites them.' I did what I thought was right; but two sleepless nights showed me I had made a terrible mistake. How often, those two nights, I went to his room, and saw only the pale moonlight shining on an empty bed.

"And it was all over such a trifle. I want to see my boy happily married, and therefore made plans to select a wife for him. He would not listen to me. He said he intended to marry one Chee, of the family of Soo. Moreover, he said he intended to be a painter instead of taking up some business as I wanted him to do. So we quarrelled.

"Well, I shall take him back home. He can be a painter if he wishes. I shall prepare a studio for him with the finest teaks and tapestries money can buy. It shames me to see one of the family of Lee in such a hovel as this. But I shall not permit him to marry Ah Chee, for I have been told that she is unfilial, disrespectful, and has adopted many of the ways of the white women."

"Perhaps that is not true," suggested the girl respectfully. "May I ask who told you?"

"I think it was Bo Ch'at, the butcher; but it doesn't matter. I have decided that my son shall not marry her. But he may return home. He is all we have. When he sees the maid I have selected for him, he will forget Ah Chee and make the old folks happy. And that is right. For is it not written that 'life flickers like a wick——' "

"S-sh!" Edwards raised his hand to enjoin silence. There was a heavy tread in the hall.

Lee Fong stood up. All faced the door expectantly —all save the girl. She had turned away, her head bowed, her face burning with shame, hot tears falling through her fingers to the floor.

CHAPTER XI

"In gossip from four corners
one may find some truth!"

ARRIVED at Agent Brown's offices on the second floor of the Custom-house, Ah Lim was held in one of the rear rooms while Brown in his private office questioned Lee Quan. Brown sat at his big, flat-topped desk, a stenographer on his left, Inspector Ellwood flanking him on the right. Across the table, where the strong light from the window would betray every facial expression, sat Lee Quan.

Lee Quan was sworn; then Brown opened a drawer and got out a typewritten sheet of questions marked: "Questions That Must be Asked in Order to Make Sure of the Identity of Chinese."

"What is your family name?" Brown read the first question.

"I belong to the family of Lee."

"What is your *tong* name?"

"Hop Sui Bin Kee."

"What is your book name?"

"Lee Ah Doo."

"What is the given name by which you are now known among your own people?"

"Quan."

"Mr. Lee Quan, if you are married, please state your married name."

"I am not married—yet," smiled Lee Quan.

"If you are in business, what is your business name?"

"I have not yet chosen a business name."

"What is your name on your *chaak gee?*"

"I was born in America, therefore I have no Chinese registration certificate."

"By what name are you known among the Americans?"

"My Americanised name is Joseph Q. Lee."

There were further questions regarding Lee Quan's age, residence, occupation, and similar inquiries concerning his father. Brown hurried through these, then laid aside his question sheet. "I hope that will identify you," he smiled. "Funny all the names you people pack around. Well"—Brown laid out the two parcels Edwards had taken from Ah Lim. He leaned back in his chair and looked at Lee Quan. "Mr. Lee," he began in that kindly, conversational tone that had seldom failed to inspire confidence, "I wish you would tell me frankly and truthfully where you got this morphine."

"I found it in my room last night, Mr. Brown. One package was hidden beneath the mattress; the other was concealed in a crack between the window frame and the wall."

"Yes, yes: I understand. But where did you get this stuff *in the first place?* Come! The truth now!"

"Mr. Brown, I swear I never saw these parcels before I found them in my room. I had reason to believe that some one was plotting against me, that

Ah Kee had hidden this morphine in my room, and that some one would notify you to arrest me."

Brown swung forward quickly. "All right! But when you found this morphine, why didn't you get in touch with me at once and tell your story? Why did you give it to Ah Lim to hide it from us? If this story of yours is true, why did you let us waste our time searching your room?"

"I did what I thought was best; but I see my mistake now. Although I have an American education, it seems that I still have a Chinese mind. And the Chinese never take the direct, obvious course."

Brown studied this for a moment; then he turned to Ellwood. "Go out and see how many men are in the office. Send every one of them up to Chinatown right away. Tell them to connect with Inspectors Summers and Westing. We got to grab this hop, Ah Kee."

Ellwood left. Brown turned again to Lee Quan.

"What reason had you for thinking that Ah Kee put this morphine in your room?"

"Ah Lim saw him go in."

"What was Ah Lim doing there?"

Lee Quan hesitated.

"Mr. Brown," he said courteously, "I want to help you, and I want you to believe me. But there is a personal matter connected with this that, since it concerns others, I am not at liberty to discuss. I cannot tell you why Ah Lim was watching my room. Nor can I tell you how I chanced to overhear Ah Lim tell about seeing Ah Kee go into my room."

"I see," Brown mused, his eyes narrowed. "There's

usually some mysterious thing that keeps you fellows from telling the whole truth. Well, if this is a plot against you, who is behind it? Who had Ah Kee plant this stuff in your room? Who wrote us this letter about you being a morphine peddler?"

"Of course, I have no proof to back up my belief; but there is only one person whom I know has any reason for wanting to make me trouble. That is Bo Ch'at."

"Bo Ch'at, the butcher?"

"Yes, sir."

"Nonsense. Where would he get all this dope?"

"That," replied Lee Quan with significant emphasis, "is what I have been wondering."

"I see." Brown was silent a moment. "Why would Bo Ch'at do a thing like this to you?"

"That, too, Mr. Brown, is purely a personal matter that I prefer not to discuss."

Brown's eyes flashed. "Ellwood," he snapped, as the latter entered the office, "this man is altogether too talkative and confidential. Take him out before he talks himself into gaol. Bring Ah Lim here!"

Ah Lim, much to Brown's satisfaction, proved a willing witness. With many bows and grins he answered every question put to him. In fact he talked so freely, and frequently rambled so far afield, that Brown was a bit suspicious.

"Ellwood, it looks like we have been dragged into an old-fashioned Chinese melodrama. There's Ah Chee, the bee-yutiful maiden. Soo Wang, her rich father, thinks she should marry Bo Ch'at, the deep-

dyed villyun with the butcher knives. She prefers Lee Quan, the misunderstood hee-ro who hides beneath a table. Funny business. I wish the boys would hustle up and grab Ah Kee. He seems to be the—ah—key to the whole business. And say, Ellwood, you'd better run up to Chinatown yourself and ask old Soo Wang to drop down here. Also, go around by Lee Quan's room and see who the boys have nabbed there. Remember, don't tell Soo Wang a thing. Don't let him see Lee Quan or Ah Lim. He doesn't know we've talked with them. If he verifies what they said, then——"

The door opened. "Parden me, Mr. Brown," said the clerk. He whispered in Brown's ear. "There's quite a delegation out there to see you. I thought I'd better not 'phone. There's Soo Wang, and Sutherland, the broker; there's a Chink named Wing; and there's Toi Lo, secretary of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce. Toi will interpret for Soo Wang, who is very anxious to see you."

Brown whistled.

"Ellwood, take Ah Lim out through the hall. Leave him with a guard, and hustle back. We're going to learn something yet."

As soon as the door had closed behind Ellwood and Ah Lim, the clerk ushered in Soo Wang's party. Sutherland, the Customs broker, attended to introductions. Brown knew Toi Lo.

"Glad to see you again, Toi," he said. "I'm up against another Chinese puzzle."

The secretary, a prosperous appearing young man in American clothes, did not smile at Brown's remarks. "Mr. Brown," he said, soberly, "this is very bad business. It isn't right that a few Chinese should be permitted to cast a stigma on all of us. If there is anything we can do to help you wipe out this morphine traffic, we will gladly do it. It doesn't seem possible that Lee Quan and Ah Lim are mixed up in this business, but I understand that you have them under arrest."

"Who told you that?" demanded Brown.

"Mr. Soo."

"How did he know it?"

Toi and Soo conversed for a moment in Cantonese. "He says," translated Toi, "that he was afraid that Bo Ch'at would do harm to Lee Quan, so he sent this man, Wing, to watch Bo Ch'at. Bo Ch'at left his house this morning at about nine and went at once to Canton Street. He hung around there all morning. When the officers left with Lee Quan and Ah Lim, Wing saw them. Bo Ch'at also saw them, and appeared to take great delight in their arrest. He hastened away at once. Wing was about to follow him when he happened to see Mr. Soo. Mr. Soo was on his way to Lee Quan's room to see him on a business matter. Informed by Wing of Lee Quan's arrest, Mr. Soo got in touch with me at once—and here we are."

"I see," mused Brown. "Now ask Mr. Soo if Ah Lim ever said anything to him about a man named Ah Kee?"

Toi did this. Soo Wang quickly confirmed everything Ah Lim had said about Ah Kee and the plot against Lee Quan.

Brown was convinced. This couldn't be a cooked-up story. It had been confirmed too many times.

Moreover, Brown could not but be most favourably impressed by Soo Wang. Sitting erect and dignified, his slender fingers combing his thin gray beard, he looked every whit the Chinese gentleman.

"Toi," said Brown, "do you know this man, Ah Kee?"

"I don't know him, but Mr. Soo has told me what he has learned. It seems that Ah Kee is one of the few remaining old men of our people who smoke opium. They say he works for Bo Ch'at. I am rather surprised at that. Bo Ch'at is not particularly well liked by the Chinese, but he has always borne a good reputation. Why he should employ an opium user, I do not know."

"And where did he get the morphine he had Ah Kee put in Lee Quan's room?"

"You will have to ask Bo Ch'at about that," smiled the secretary.

"That," concluded Brown, rising, "is just what I propose to do without any more delay. Toi, if I release Lee Quan and Ah Lim, will you give me your word that they will in no way interfere in my investigation of this case?"

"More than that, I will give you my word that they will assist you in every way possible."

"Good enough. Ellwood, bring Lee Quan and Ah Lim here. We'll tell them just where we are at."

This was done. Brown and Ellwood prepared to leave for Chinatown.

"We'll go by your room, Lee," said Brown. "I'll pick up the two men I left there and take them with me to call on Bo Ch'at."

"I'll go with you," said Lee Quan. "I remember you told those two officers to 'grab' every one who came to the door. I'm curious——"

Sutherland touched Lee on the arm.

"Mr. Lee, can you step over to the office a minute? Mr. Soo is very anxious to see you."

Lee Quan turned to Brown.

"I really wasn't expecting any callers this morning. Do you think it necessary for me to accompany you to my room?"

"Not at all," smiled Brown. "I'll make due apologies to any of your creditors who may have dropped in."

. . . . . .

Accompanying the broker across the street to the latter's office, Lee Quan found that Soo Wang and Toi Lo had preceded him. Sutherland put out chairs, then sat down at his desk.

"Lee," said Mr. Sutherland, smiling, "Mr. Soo wants to know how much you will take for that option you have on his stock of *ng ka py?*"

Lee Quan registered surprise. "I hadn't thought of selling."

Toi put this into Chinese for Soo Wang's benefit.

Soo turned to Lee Quan. He spoke in the most ingratiating tone in Cantonese.

"I will give back your five hundred dollars and will give you five hundred dollars additional if you will tear up that paper I signed."

"That isn't enough, Mr. Soo," returned Lee in Cantonese. "I can make much more by holding for a rise in price."

"You are a robber!" cried Soo in sudden anger.

"No," smiled Lee. "I am merely a good business man. I do not like business, but circumstances forced me into it and I must make the most of it."

Soo Wang fumed. "This is an outrage, but I must have something to supply my customers or I shall lose them. I will give you a thousand dollars for that option."

"That is still not enough, Mr. Soo," replied Lee. "A friend of mine in Washington obtained knowledge of this order yesterday by honourable means and telegraphed me, hoping it would be of value to me. Well, it is." He looked the shrewd old merchant in the eye. "Mr. Soo, I need exactly two thousand dollars!"

Soo Wang glared; then slowly, he began nodding his head; his slender fingers curled at his thin gray beard.

"Son of Lee," he intoned in musical Cantonese, "you move warily and gain your ends by well-laid plans. Now if you can paint pictures as cleverly as you can swindle an honest merchant, you will become famous. Shall I make out a cheque?"

"It is not necessary. Merely give me your word

that the betrothal price of your daughter, Ah Chee, is paid."

Soo Wang leaned back in his chair, and sighed deeply.

"It is paid, Lee Quan; but, by *The Seven-faced god,* I never thought I should have to pay it myself!"

CHAPTER XII

"When death hovers, truth draws near!"

NARCOTIC Agent Brown, having no desire to be pulled unceremoniously through the doorway of Lee Quan's room, rapped a quick signal that he knew the rough-handed inspector would understand. The door opened. Brown and Ellwood walked in.

"Everything is all right," announced Brown. "Well! Who's this?"

"Lee Quan's father," replied Edwards. "Girl says her name is Ah Sen. Old gent don't savvy English."

"It's all right, miss," said Brown, gazing in undisguised admiration at the girl. "I'm sorry we had to do this. You may go now. But first, will you please tell Mr. Lee that his son has been released—and completely exonerated."

The girl quickly dried her tears. "The officers say we may go now," she told Lee Fong in Cantonese. "It was all a mistake. They apologise for annoying us."

"Ah, didn't I tell you!" cried the overjoyed father, "didn't I tell you that my son had nothing in common with thieves and drug smugglers? I shall leave a note for my son to return home at once. I must hasten home and tell his mother to prepare his favourite dish, *seen leen ap gong,* for the mid-day meal.

"And Ah Sen! I shall tell my boy about you at once. A marriage broker will call on your father this

afternoon. If there is no stain on your family name I shall pay the betrothal price quickly. And when Lee Quan sees you he will be glad I have kept him from that impudent little upstart, Ah Chee!"

"Come on, boys!" said Brown. "That girl is going to cry again. Leave them here to enjoy themselves. We have work ahead."

Out in the hall, where he was not likely to be overheard, Brown gave his men their instructions.

"Edwards, you and Mason kick along and connect with Westing and Summers. Tell them to close in on Bo Ch'at's shop, but not to tip their hand unless I give the word. Find out if they have seen Ah Kee. Then meet me at Bo Ch'at's."

The two inspectors left.

"Ellwood," said Brown, "you remember that Soo Wang's man, Wing, reported that Bo Ch'at was hanging around here all morning and saw us take in Lee Quan and Ah Lim. Now when Bo Ch'at sees you and me walk in his front door he may become suspicious and try the vanishing act. Therefore, watch out. Come on; let's go."

They went down Canton Street, crossed *The Alley of Lingering Shadows*, and circled around to the front entrance of Bo Ch'at's shop. There, Brown led the way through the mass of clerks and chattering customers to the stairs that led up to the main office.

The book-keeper was humped over his ledger. Bo Ch'at was not in sight.

"Where is Bo Ch'at?" Brown asked the question in a casual tone.

"Bo Ch'at?" echoed the Oriental, looking up. "He go out."

"When will he be back?"

"Oh, bime-by. Mebbe long time. No can tell."

Ellwood tried the door of the private office and found it locked. "Chief, I bet a month's pay he's in there," he whispered.

"What is your name?" Brown asked the man at the desk.

"Leong."

"Well, Leong, we're Government officers. You understand?" He showed his badge. "We want to talk with Bo Ch'at. No trouble. Just want a little information. You savvy?"

For an instant Leong's eyes rested on Brown's badge. Not a muscle in the yellow face moved; but, slowly, the lids drooped over the slant eyes until they were mere oblique lines of glittering black.

"I savvy," said Leong calmly; "but Bo Ch'at—he go out."

"Then why is the private office locked?"

"Bo Ch'at all time lock 'im when he go out."

While Brown debated what to do, Edwards and Mason returned. Brown drew Edwards aside.

"We've got 'em, chief," Edwards replied to Brown's question. "The boys have had a ring around this place for two hours. Ah Kee sleeps here; and he hasn't gone out this morning. Bo Ch'at came to his store shortly after ten o'clock and has never left it."

"Good enough!" returned Brown; "but we must go slow. Remember, we haven't a thing on this crowd

yet. You scout around and see what is behind this private office. I'll try the door again."

Brown pounded on the door, and called. There was no answer.

Then Inspector Ellwood touched his arm, pointed to something on the desk in front of Leong. It was the telephone. The receiver was off the hook. "That's an inter-office 'phone, I bet; and Bo Ch'at is inside getting an earful."

Brown stepped to the desk, picked up the receiver, and listened. For a moment there was silence; then —the tell-tale *click* of a receiver being put on the hook.

"Leong," said Brown, and his tone brooked no trifling, "Bo Ch'at is in that office. Are you going to open the door, or must we smash it in?"

"Aw, wassa mallee you?" cried Leong. "I tell you Bo Ch'at go out. You savvy? He go out!"

"Come on, boys," concluded Brown. "We can't waste any more time. Down with that door!"

Ellwood flung his weight against the door with such force that the whole wall creaked and trembled.

"*Haie!* You wait!" Leong sprang off his stool. His hand dived into a drawer. "You wait!" he shrilled, swinging a bunch of keys. "Bo Ch'at go out. Mebbeso he leave key. You wait!"

Brown took out his watch.

"Leong, you have a key to this door and you know exactly where it is. I'm not going to stand here and let you make a fool of us while you try those keys pretending to hunt for the right one. If that door is

not open in exactly two minutes, you suffer the consequences."

"All light," grunted Leong surlily. "You wait, see."

He tried one key after another. None fitted.

"Time!" called Brown—and the door swung ajar.

"The key wasn't on the bunch," spoke up Ellwood. "I saw him take it from his blouse."

They crowded through the doorway—and stopped short. The room was empty.

Brown's suspicions were now thoroughly aroused. His narrowed eyes whipped around the room, taking in every detail, the desk and chair, the telephone, the absence of windows or doors, the spotless floor, the dust-laden bundles on the shelves.

"Boys, there's something wrong here. Ellwood, give Leong a frisk. Mason, skip out and tell Westing to give you a couple of raiding axes. Say, what is that smell? Not opium!"

"Heaven only knows," sniffed Ellwood. "Might be——"

"I see it!" cried Brown. He stepped to Bo Ch'at's desk. There, its burning tip scorching the varnish, lay a cigarette. Brown picked it up, studied the ash a moment.

"Hasn't been lying here long," he concluded, tossing it away. "Bo Ch'at sat right here and listened in while we talked to his book-keeper. Then he hung up and skipped, skipped so hurriedly that he forgot this cigarette. Now, when a Chink forgets something like that, he's scared, believe me! But how did he get out of this room?"

Getting to his hands and knees, Brown put his eyes as near as possible on a level with the floor. "Ellwood, if you're through searching that Chink, slip the cuffs on him and run the chain through the arm of that chair. Leong won't get far dragging that. Then turn out the light."

Ellwood had found nothing of interest on Leong. He carried out Brown's instructions. As soon as the light was out, Brown turned on his flashlight, held it close to the floor, swung it in a half-circle.

"Aha! Though I'd see it now if there was anything to see. Ellwood, listen to me! Bo Ch'at got up from that desk and walked straight over to that wall *but he didn't come back!*"

"How the deuce do you figure that, chief? I can't see any dust for a man to make a track in."

"That's just it," explained Brown, jumping up. "Bo Ch'at knows how we frequently get on a hot trail by finding a track in the dust. Trying to avoid that, he has gone too far the other way. The floor is so confounded clean that Bo Ch'at, coming in from the street, left a very faint imprint of dust on his spotless floor. Well, on with that light again! No use to ask Leong to show us the door. Get all those bundles out of the way. Then, if we have to, we'll tear out those shelves."

By the time the shelves were clear, Inspectors Mason and Westing returned with two short-handled, keen-edged, hard-tempered axes.

"Leong," said Brown, "I'll give you one chance. Will you open this hidden door?"

"No savvy door!" grunted Leong sourly.

"All right, boys; go to it! Wish we had time to get a search warrant. If this proves to be a fizzle we'll be stuck for some mighty heavy damages. But go ahead!"

Ellwood and Mason fell to with raiding axes. In a moment one of the shelves was splintered, disclosing two electric wires.

"Keep going, boys!" Brown called out. "That shows we are on the right track; but there's no use trying to hit on the secret of opening the door with those wires."

Ellwood and his companion swung their axes with renewed vigour. Before long, they had cleared away the shelving and chopped a small hole in the wall.

Brown called a halt. With his flashlight he looked into the opening. There was a stairway, leading down. At the bottom—a door.

Two minutes later, they had enlarged the hole, crawled through, and were down the stairs flashing their lights on a heavy, unpainted door.

As they stood there, Brown caught the sound of a low, sharp *click*. It might have been an electric latch; it might have been something else. With a warning cry to his men, Brown sprang out of range of the door. Nothing happened.

"Gimme an axe!" Brown called out. "Come on, Ellwood!"

Standing one on each side, Brown and Ellwood attacked the door. Blow after blow fell over the spot

where, from experience, they expected to find the lock. It was slow work.

Perhaps ten minutes had passed when Brown, fuming with impatience, rose on his toes and swung his axe with terrific force. The door crashed in, swinging back on its hinges. "Look out!" cried Brown, and sprang aside. Again nothing happened.

Through the partly opened door, Brown could see a chair and a table. Above them was an electric light, burning. The ceiling was strung with smoked sausages.

"I thought I smelled opium," said Brown. "Come on, boys; but be careful."

With revolver ready, Brown flung the door back and stepped in. There he halted, amazed by an incongruous sight.

On the floor lay an old man. Beside him was an opium lay-out, the lamp burning. With steady hand, the old Chinese was cooking a "pill." He looked up at Brown, his eyes hollow, weighted with some overwhelming, crushing sadness, as though the very soul of the man were gripped in the tentacles of some hideous vice.

"Hullo!" he sang out, and his gaunt face wrinkled in smiles.

"Are you Ah Kee?" demanded Brown.

The opium smoker put the steaming bolus of opium over the vent and pierced it.

"Uh-huh! Thass all light! Me Ah Kee!"

"Where's Bo Ch'at?"

Hungrily, Ah Kee's lips closed over the mouthpiece of his opium pipe. He sighed, and his eyelids drooped sleepily. Over the bowl, a filmy white smoke was curling, the heated opium was singing its old, old lullaby.

Then: Ah Kee raised his hand—*motioned casually with the yen hok!*

Behind the door they found Bo Ch'at, a cleaver sunk deep in his skull.

. . . . . .

With Ah Kee's assistance, Brown quickly located the drug câche, the cans of pickled meat with their hidden vials of morphine, and the "sausage." With this evidence, Brown and Ellwood escorted Ah Kee and the book-keeper to the Custom-house. There, Ah Kee talked freely. Confronted with Ah Kee's sworn statement, and informed that Bo Ch'at was dead, Leong denied nothing, placing all the blame on his employer.

"I'm satisfied that is where it belongs," said Brown.

He got out the two parcels they had found on Ah Lim, and laid them on the desk in front of Ah Kee.

"Ah Kee, I want to ask you as a matter of record if you can identify these as the two parcels you planted in Lee Quan's room?"

Ah Kee grinned and nodded.

"They were given to you by Bo Ch'at?"

"Oh, no! I ketchem China dlug sto'."

"Drug store! You bought this morphine in a Chinese drug store?"

"Oh, thass all light," chuckled Ah Kee. "Thass quinine!"

"What!"

"Thass all. I no put mo'phine in Lee Quan's loom. Him same family name. You savvy?"

"The devil! Can it be possible, Ellwood, that the biggest morphine dealer in Chinatown has been put out of business with a dime's worth of quinine? Skip up to the laboratory and get a little nitric acid!"

Ellwood returned soon with a small vial of colourless liquid. The acid test confirmed Ah Kee's story.

"Of course I knew that quinine sulphate looks, tastes, and feels just like morphine sulphate; and we would have tested this before we used it in court. If I had discovered before that this stuff is only quinine I would have chucked the whole case; and that would have been very unfortunate. Well, Ah Kee——"

Brown hesitated. Duty sometimes led into unpleasant paths.

"All right, Ellwood," he said finally. "It can't be helped."

Ellwood stepped quietly to the door, opened it, and beckoned to some one in the waiting-room.

Two uniformed police officers walked in.

"Ah Kee," said Brown kindly, "I'm sorry for you. I'll do all I can for you; but that isn't much. You're guilty of complicity in the unlawful sale of narcotic drugs; and that's bad enough. But that must wait. Just now I have to turn you over to the police for the murder of Bo Ch'at."

In the silence that followed, the *click* of steel

sounded clear and sharp, pregnant with terrible meaning.

Ah Kee looked down, jingled the handcuffs that gripped his bony old wrists.

"Oh, thass all light," he grinned happily as they led him away. "Thass all light!"

CHAPTER XIII

"Congratulations! May you gather wealth!"

THEY had lingered long around the bamboo table on Ah Chee's balcony. The lanterns were glowing softly. Across the way, the Chinese orchestra finished its *Ode to Dying Winter*—a tremulous wail of flageolets, a crash of cymbals. Then, out of the silence, from the street below—the *slf-slf-slf* of Chinese slippers; the imperious *click-click* of American heels.

From a jar of their best *ng ka py,* Ah Lim refilled the bowls, then poured tea for Ah Chee.

"But, father," argued Lee Quan gently, "did not our own Kung Fu Tse say: 'Where love is, yield not to an army'?"

"The master's very words!" Soo Wang exclaimed. "And hear me, Lee Fong, it is also written that 'outwardly one may conform, yet inwardly keep to one's own standards.' In her heart, my daughter did no wrong, did only her filial duty, and did it nobly. Soon after I had started for Lee Quan's room, she heard that Lee Quan had been arrested. Thinking that I might walk into a trap and become entangled, Ah Chee hastened after me. When she got so far as Lee Quan's room and had not seen me, she became alarmed, and made bold to rap on the door. You know what happened then, Lee Fong, for the same thing happened to

you. Ah Chee recognised you; but she was afraid to let you know her identity until I could explain for her. She is——"

"*Haie!*" spluttered Lee Fong impatiently. "Ah Chee conducted herself with modesty and dignity. I am thinking of my own conduct. I am trying to remember what I said *about* Ah Chee this morning when I was talking *to* Ah Chee but thought I was talking to a strange girl from Oakland. By the *Three Pure Ones,* Ah Chee, you tricked me neatly!"

Ah Chee did not know what to say. She wanted to hide her burning cheeks; but she could not do that with one hand, and Lee Quan simply refused to let go of the other one. So Ah Chee bowed her head, too happy for words.

"Well," rumbled Lee Fong, "we shall have a big wedding with an orchestra and a procession, and——"

"And I shall give a three-day banquet," spoke up Soo Wang. "Well, Ah Lim, what, in the honoured name of Buddha, is the matter with you now?"

Ah Lim had been serving the party. Now, grinning and bowing, he stood just back of Lee Quan and Ah Chee.

"I am very happy, sire. I ask permission to speak for the bride and groom our favourite Chinese toast."

He raised his bowl:

"*May you have ten thousand sons and grandsons!*"

MOCK DON YUEN MEDITATES

I

HALF aloud, and with much facial contortion, Mock Don Yuen was reading the Seventh Chapter of *The Analects of Confucius*. He sat very straight in his carved, high-backed chair of Chinese blackwood, and he looked very severe and dignified. The long, polished nail of his right forefinger rested on one character until he had whispered it, then passed down the column to the next; and as his finger moved from character to character his head ducked in unison, until one standing in front of him could have seen, over the book, only the top of Mock Don Yuen's red-buttoned cap.

"While—the—vulgar—fret, a gentleman—is always—calm and spacious. . . ."

So he read; and then, as he paused to meditate, some one rapped sharply on the door. It was not the hour for visitors. Slowly, Mock Don Yuen turned his head, and listened.

"Aih!" he exclaimed, softly. "It is an impertinent foreign devil. Only the *fan quai* use their knuckles in that fashion and beat on one's door so loudly and imperatively. I will not answer." And he spread his book on the teak-wood table before him and calmly resumed his reading.

Several times the one at the door rapped, each time more loudly and insistently; but Mock Don Yuen sat very still, his deep bronze eyes studying the strange characters of his book. Then, after a silence, the caller gave the Chinese rap; a swift tattoo on the panel with the ends of the finger-nails. At once Mock Don Yuen looked up; and, after an instant's hesitation, he arose and went to the door.

He was tall, for a Chinese, and he seemed even taller with his long, braided queue and his loose-fitting, embroidered blouse of black satin. He did not shuffle after the manner of a coolie, but walked erect with the graceful dignity befitting one who has reached the age of forty and thereby acquired the right to grow a beard.

Cautiously, Mock Don Yuen opened the door. He permitted a look of mild astonishment to flash over his face.

"*T'ao ch'i! T'ao ch'i!* You are a troublesome little Tartar, Ah Din. Will you walk into my contemptible home?"

Ah Din was a fat-cheeked, saucy-looking boy of sixteen; but he had been properly schooled by his old Chinese tutor in *The Rules of Behaviour for Children.* So Ah Din took the polite three steps forward, clasped his hands in front of him, and, bending at the hips, bowed thrice.

Mock Don Yuen closed the door, and returned to his seat at the table. He motioned his visitor to a stool of Chinese ebony, and Ah Din seated himself. Since it is very discourteous to wear glasses in the

presence of a guest, Mock Don Yuen removed his; and, as he raised his hand, the sleeve of his satin blouse fell back and disclosed a beautiful bracelet of the finest Yunnan jade.

There was silence for about the time it takes to brew a cup of tea; for the man was too polite to ask his caller's business, and the boy was too well-bred to be hasty in stating it.

"You are well, Ah Din?" asked Mock Don Yuen, at length, speaking Cantonese.

"I am well, honourable sir."

"And my estimable cousin, Ah Yut, your father—is he well?"

"My honourable father is quite well, sir."

"That is good." With painstaking precision, Mock Don Yuen wiped his glasses with his green silk handkerchief, and replaced the handkerchief in the left sleeve of his blouse. "Ah Din," he went on, "why did you at first knock on my door like a rude foreign devil?"

Ah Din had already flung his school cap on to the table. Now, remembering his Chinese manners, he also kicked off his slippers.

"Because, honourable sir," he made answer, "I sometimes forget that I am a Chink—er—I mean a Chinese."

"*Ts!* And how can one ever forget that?"

"By being born here, as I was; by going to school here, as I am; by having many friends among the white people, as I have; by liking their ways, as I do. And sometimes—sometimes——" he finished slowly, still

speaking Cantonese, "I almost wish I were not yellow!"

"*Hai-e!* What an unfilial wish!" Mock Don Yuen shook his head and clicked his tongue. For a space, then, he looked out the window and down at the motley throng that swarmed the main street of San Francisco's Chinatown. Presently he reached for his long, tasselled, tobacco pipe.

"You are very impious and ungrateful, Ah Din," he said severely. "Surely, your honourable father does not approve of such wicked sentiments!"

Ah Din flung out his slender, nervous hands in that gesture that is peculiarly Chinese. He looked up into the eyes of his father's cousin.

"Pardon me, sir, if I seem disrespectful to my father; but truth is the only sure road to understanding. My father, as you know, is an ignorant, lower-class Cantonese, and will always be. He is what our own people call 'a Cantonese rat.'

"So my father lives as the lower-class Cantonese have lived for many centuries. He eats Chinese food shipped here from Canton; and he wears Chinese clothing. He has two wives, which the Americans think is very wrong; and he does many other things which they think are even worse. He belongs to the class that gives the Americans a mistaken idea of the great nation of China; but he cannot change now."

Mock Don Yuen spoke thoughtfully.

"Truth, from the lips of a son, may be like the finest of silk hiding a sharp blade. How unfilial——"

"But, honourable sir," protested the boy, "I knew well the teachings of *The Twenty-four Patterns of*

Filial Piety, as well as many of the wise sayings of Kung Fu Tse. I know it is my duty to think only of my parents; but that is not the American way. China looks ever backward; America looks forward. I am young. The wheel of my life has but turned sixteen. Let me look forward and live as I choose! Let me live as an American!"

Mock Don Yuen was gravely meditating.

"I want to go to an American business college and learn the latest business methods," went on Ah Din, musingly. "Then I shall go to China and be a rich banker. My honourable father—he wants me to work in a fish market!"

Mock Don Yuen placed a pinch of tobacco in the tiny bowl of his long pipe, and lighted it with a burning punk he took from a brazen censer that stood on the floor by the window. The while he smoked his three pipes in silence, Ah Din looked around the room. The furniture was of softly gleaming teakwood, ornately carved; and the room was shadowy and restful with Oriental tapestries of Hang-chiu silk embroidered with threads of gold and rich black and purple clusters of wistaria on backgrounds of Imperial yellow. On one side of the study table was a tiny Buddha carved of Ningpo wood; and opposite it a costly Poochow tray, lacquered, and embellished with encrustations of coral and malachite.

Presently Mock Don Yuen blew the ashes from his pipe, and laid it down. He leaned back in his chair and folded his hands across his stomach, which, as every Chinese knows, is the seat of wisdom.

"My son," he said, "you are in the spring of life; and your words are as the spring winds from the peaks of Tsyi-i—gusty, and having no substance. Learning is more precious than gold; but filial piety is more precious than learning. If your honourable father does not approve of you going to this foreign devil school, you should meditate long before disobeying him. These foreign devils are very ignorant and irreligious. In their temples they have but one god; while, as you well know, we have in China a great temple with over five hundred gods! You see, my son, I am but lately from the Hills of T'ong, and I see with clear eyes. And so, before you are disobedient to your father and leave him to take up the strange ways of the white foreign devils, walk a long way around, my son—and go softly!"

There was that in the man's quiet tone and priest-like air that awed the boy to respectful silence; and he bowed his head and looked thoughtfully at the tiger-fur rug that lay by his white-stockinged feet. There was no sound for about the time it takes to sip a cup of hot tea; then Mock Don Yuen picked up his *hop toy* from the opium lay-out by his couch, and began scraping at the inside with the flat end of the *yen hok*. Finding that the little horn jar contained not even one smoke of opium, he set it down again, breathing a low exclamation of disappointment.

At that, Ah Din seemed to arouse with a start. He thrust a hand into the folds of his blouse, and drew out an envelope. He handed the letter to Mock Don Yuen.

The man noted quickly that the envelope had been securely sealed. He tore it open, drew out the bit of folded rice paper, and read the message. He looked down at Ah Din:

"Do you know what is in this letter?"

"No, honourable sir. My foster-sister, Chan Fah, met me at the foot of the stairs as I came home from school and told me to take the letter to you. In about sixteen flaps of a slipper I was here."

Mock Don Yuen laid the note on the table, and arose. "It is of no great moment," he said. "Your father wishes to see me on some trifling matter. I may as well go now and speak with him. Wait for me while I get my street coat."

The instant Mock Don Yuen had passed through the beaded portières into the inner room, Ah Din sprang to his feet and moved swiftly and silently to the table. It took him but a moment to make out the Chinese characters:

"Honourable Cousin, Whose Liver is
Large with Benevolence:

I pray you come to my wretched bedside without delay. I have a secret matter of great importance to discuss with you, and the doctor says I must die in less than it takes an old incense stick to burn.

AH YUT."

"Ah, ha!" exclaimed Ah Din as he hastened back to his stool. *"Ah, ha!* I smell a rat!"

II

Ah Yut's hand was long and lean and yellow, and there was a barbaric grace in the way he gave the warm opium a final kneading on the bowl of his pipe, placed it over the vent, and deftly pierced it with the *yen hok*. He licked his lips, hungrily, and pressed them against the smoked ivory mouthpiece. It took but the usual swallow, and the one long, sobbing inhalation to exhaust the tiny bolus of opium; and the Oriental's eyes closed with dreamy, animal satisfaction, and his cruel face, black as a Swatow fisherman, softened gradually into new lines. When, with a deep sigh, he had expelled the nauseous vapour through mouth and nostrils, he sat up on the edge of the bunk and, without cleaning the pipe, which was unusual even for Ah Yut, laid it on the table by the opium lamp. And now his eyes, bright as polished jet, narrowed with cunning, and his face bore a look of mingled subtlety, and resolution.

For a space, Lee So, his principal wife, bore her husband's piercing look in silence; then she paused in her sewing, adjusted the black cloth that covered the bald spot on her forehead, and spoke nervously:

"You said you had some matters of importance to tell us, honourable husband."

"All the more reason why you should not disturb me," growled Ah Yut, his voice deep and resonant. "*Aih!* You have the manners of a river pig! That you have borne me a son and have thereby earned the right to speak without first asking my permission,

does not mean that you have the right to chatter all the time like a noisy cicada!" He spat on the floor in disgust, then raised his voice: "Chan Fah!"

A girl ran from one of the inner rooms to the side of her foster-father's bunk. She was perhaps nineteen, and she wore, with graceful modesty, the embroidered jacket and silken trousers of her people. Her glossy, black hair, fragrant with a subtle Oriental perfume, was drawn tightly back from her forehead and plaited in a queue with gold and jade ornaments. Her earrings were of the finest Yunnan jade; her pretty mouth was reddened with a single fine line of rouge; and her face was as fair as old ivory.

Ah Yut glared at his secondary wife, Jue Yoke, until she laid aside the smock she was mending and gave him all her attention. Then, looking over the heads of his two wives, he spoke:

"It is about my cousin, Mock Don Yuen. He is very rich; I have nothing. I may as well be a dog in the streets as to live always with not a single *cash* more than I need to buy fish and rice for you piggish women. And after living here these many moons, hopping about like a frightened toad to keep out of the clutches of the foreign devil police while making an honest living dealing in smuggled opium and slave girls, I must now go to prison!"

Lee So's mouth flew open, but her husband frowned at her so fiercely that she quickly covered it with her hand.

"Yesterday I got a letter from Mo Lung, who lives in Stockton. It said that a foreign devil would call

on me to buy opium, and that he could be trusted. Last night after evening-rice the white man called, and said he wanted to buy $500 worth of first-grade Macao opium, unstamped. It was easy to drive a sharp bargain with him, and I can make a handsome profit. I agreed to deliver the opium to him to-night in the alley behind the *Great Fragrancy Peanut Store.*

"But Ah Yut is no fool. The white man did not haggle over the price as any honest dealer in smuggled opium would; and I became suspicious. When he had walked his way, I quickly put on my long, black coat, and cap, like what the *fan quai* wear, and I went out the alley and ran swiftly to Dupont Street. There stood the foreign devil watching the entrance to our stairway. After about the time it takes to clean an opium pipe he went down Clay Street. I followed him. He went to the big building of the Government Agents."

"The *suey quan hou!*" exclaimed Chan Fah.

"*Aih!* he is one of the cursed *suey quan hou!* He is one of the Custom-house devils who work secretly for the Government. When I deliver the opium to him, he will pay me with marked money; then he will arrest me and send me to prison. May *filthy dogs eat out his wicked heart!*"

"But, honourable father, are you sure?" spoke up Chan Fah, after a respectful silence. "There are many offices in the Big Red Building."

"I thought of that. And so I spoke to Ah Din, who understands wire-talking: and he tried to talk with Mo Lung on the wire, but they could not find

him. So I do not know for sure that the letter is a fraud; and it is very hard to lose such a chance to make a handsome profit"

"*Hi low!* That is true. But, honourable father, you must have nothing more to do with the white men. They never bring us anything but bad fortune."

"You are a fool, Chan Fah! Kung Fu Tse was right: men who listen to women become stupid. I will play the game. If I win, I shall have my profit; if I lose, then my estimable cousin, Mock Don Yuen, shall go to prison—not I."

Chan Fah started. A moment she stared dumbly at Ah Yut; and a look of great fear crept into her dark eyes.

Ah Yut picked up his opium pipe. "It is very simple," he went on. "Mock Don Yuen has studied his books until his stomach is big with book-learning; and yet he is a fool. I have studied the ways of men; and I have gained wisdom. I have sent my cousin a note telling him that I am a very sick man. When he comes, I shall ask him him as a favour to deliver the opium for me. If he returns with the money, all is well; if he does not return . . ."

"Then you lose the opium," warned Lee So, who was a good wife and very saving of rice and flour.

"I lose nothing!" flared Ah Yut. "I signed a paper agreeing to pay Lim Sing $300 for the opium *when the foreign devil pays me.*"

"That was clever," Lee So approved. "But if Mock

Don Yuen is arrested, won't he tell the officials that you gave him the opium?"

"*Haie!* If he should be so wicked, I will buy five or six of my countrymen to go before the magistrate and swear that I had nothing whatever to do with it."

Ah Yut shoved his feet into his slippers and shuffled across the floor to the small window that looked down upon Dupont Street. He was slender, like his cousin, and his blouse, very soiled where the queue rubbed against the collar, hung about him like a sack.

There was silence, for a moment, broken only by the metallic ticking of a cheap American clock on the table. Chan Fah sat on a stool by her foster-father's couch, her hands clasped in her lap, and her eyes staring dumbly at her embroidered slippers. Jue Yoke and Lee So, shaking thier heads doubtfully, and clicking their tongues, resumed their sewing.

"*Haie!*" exclaimed Ah Yut, disgustedly. "My contemptible son has already been gone nearly as long as it takes rice to burn! He is becoming as unreliable as the insolent children of the *fan quai.*"

Lee So, who knew that her husband never discussed his affairs with them without some reason, ventured a question:

"When Ah Din and Mock Don Yuen come, what are we to do?"

"I shall pretend that I am very sick; you must weep and make a great noise."

"And then what?"

"That is enough for you to know. Do as you are told. Cry until the waters of sorrow run down your

cheeks; but keep your wagging tongue in your mouth. *Aih!* They come now! In three flaps of a loose slipper they'll be here!"

Ah Yut sprang away from the window.

"I am sick! Lee So! Jue Yoke! Chan Fah! Cry! Cry!"

He kicked off his slippers, and turned down the blankets. He held the bowl of his opium pipe over the lamp and took a long draw. That done, Ah Yut flung the pipe down, and blew out the opium lamp.

Lee So and Jue Yoke were weeping with mournful reality. Chan Fah was silent.

"Did you hear me, Chan Fah? Cry! Cry!"

The girl got dazedly to her feet. As she turned toward the door, there was a look of expectancy on her face, and something glistened in her almond eyes; but no sound came from her lips.

"Stubborn fool!" exploded Ah Yut. "Do as you are told! Cry! Cry!" And with that, Ah Yut, who never let anything stand in his way, snatched a slender bamboo from the table and struck Chan Fah a swift blow across her girlish breasts.

With a sharp cry, the girl sprang back, covered her breasts with her arms and her face with her hands and wept in real earnest. The waters of sorrow came freely to the eyes of Chan Fah; for when one weeps often, the tears flow easily. But Chan Fah had not lived in the land of the *fan quai* without learning something of the home life of her white sisters; and so, after the first cries of pain and humiliation, there crept

a new note into her weeping, a note of outraged womanhood, a note that Ah Yut would have been wise enough to heed had he not been too busy with his own schemes to notice it.

III

Mock Don Yuen seated himself on the stool at the side of his cousin's bunk, adjusted his glasses with painstaking precision, and looked long and critically at Ah Yut. Ah Din sat by the table in silence. Lee So and Jue Yoke continued their weeping so realistically as to deceive even Oriental ears. Chan Fah, however, dried her tears and stood by the window watching her foster-father and Mock Don Yuen.

"What is the trouble, cousin?"

Ah Yut groaned and rolled his eyes. "And how should I know?" he demanded peevishly. "I am dying in my bones; but when the Chinese doctor tells me one thing, and the foreign devil doctor tells me another, I may as well die at once and have it over." And he closed his eyes very tight and opened his mouth very wide and looked quite ill, indeed.

"What did the Chinese doctor say?" asked Mock Don Yuen, sympathetically.

"*Aih-yah!* He said someone must have disturbed my ancestor's bones, and that the spirits were angry with me."

"*Ts! Ts!* What misfortune!" Mock Don Yuen tucked his hands into his long sleeves as though shrinking away from the afflicted man. He looked around the room. "Where are the punk sticks and the joss

paper and the sacrificial offerings? If the spirits are angry, one must do everything possible to appease them. Did the Chinese doctor give you no medicine?"

"Yes. It was three o'clock when he was here, so he gave me three pills; and he put three *hao kao* plasters on my back. Chan Fah was to attend to the joss paper and the rest, but my big-footed daughter does nothing but stand around and cry like a buffalo calf in the Wu-chao market."

Mock Don Yuen looked around at the girl. She met his keen gaze steadily and a bit defiantly. There was a new look on her pretty face, and her dark eyes were very bright.

"And what did the foreign devil doctor say?" pursued Mock Don Yuen.

"*Haie!* He said the Chinese doctor was an idiot, and that I had rheumatism, and that he wanted three dollars. Then he wrote some strange characters on a piece of paper and told me to send it to a drug store with another dollar to get medicine."

"How unfortunate to be sick and to have to pay money, too!" exclaimed the visitor, clicking his tongue. "But endeavour to preserve your tranquillity, unfortunate cousin. Have you no *tin bin hui sup kui fung sarm shea yeuk tsau?*"

"Alas, no. It cannot be made here. We have the rice spirits; but we do not have the three varieties of snakes that must be infused into the spirits. When I was in Canton I drank several bottles of that wonderful remedy every winter; but here it must be imported, and only the rich can afford it."

"And what do the foreign devils do for troubles in the bones?" asked Mock Don Yuen, amazed.

"They have a wonderful medicine which is very good for rheumatism, or evil spirits, or any sickness. One time in Stockton a foreign devil gave me some, and I felt better right away. They call it *hoo wsze kee.*"

"Huh!" chortled Ah Din. But seeing both men frowning at him severely, he quickly covered his mouth with his hands and turned away, and tried to look very small.

Mock Don Yuen picked up Ah Yut's opium pipe, which had fallen to the floor, and as he made to replace it on the lay-out, his fingers rested for an instant on the bowl. He looked at Ah Yut.

"What is the secret matter, estimable cousin? Ah Din gave me your message."

"Alas, I am a very unfortunate man!" moaned Ah Yut. "I am about to die as penniless as a wandering Hakka. And who will pay the priest? Who will buy the sacrificial meats?" And he shut his eyes so tightly that two tears oozed from their corners and trickled down the wrinkled temples.

"*Ts! Ts!* It must be very hard to live always like one whose pipe is cold, and whose purse contains not even one tael of silver!"

"That is why I sent for you, benevolent cousin. If you will but help me, I shall not die a pauper, but can have a funeral befitting my station, and can leave a few hundred dollars in *fan quai* money for my family, which they will squander foolishly, I suppose."

"I am your blood cousin, Ah Yut; and it is only right that I should help one of our family. Tell me this trouble."

Ah Yut moved to raise himself on one elbow, but, suddenly remembering his affliction, he sank back on the grass-seed pillow, groaning, and rolling his eyes.

"*Aih-yah!* May the one who disturbed my ancestor's bones have his hands chopped off with dull cleavers! Listen well, cousin; for I must lean on you. A foreign devil whom I have known long, and whom I trust, was to pay me $500 in *fan quai* money to-night for some opium. I have dealt often with him, and he will buy from no other, for he does not want it known that he is a dealer. I was to meet him in the alley to-night behind the *Great Fragrancy Peanut Store;* but alas, I cannot go. If you would go in my place, cousin. . . ."

A moment Mock Don Yuen meditated.

"Will the foreign devil deal with me, Ah Yut?"

"*Haie!* They are very stupid! They seldom know one of our people from another; in fact, save for the queue, they often cannot tell us from the Japanese; and, as any one knows, we do not resemble the Japanese in the least. Besides, you and I are cousins and look much alike. If you wear my long, black coat, and cap, and say what I tell you, the foreign devil will never suspect that he is not talking with Ah Yut."

"Tell me," demanded Mock Don Yuen, suddenly; "why do you not go by your honourable family name —Mock Yut? It is very disrespectful to our an-

cestors for you to drop your family name that way."

Ah Yut was not too ill to chuckle. "Disrespectful, perhaps, estimable cousin, but much safer. I am known to the elders of our *tong* by my family name—Mock Yut. But to the wicked foreign devil police I am known as Ah Yut. And when they ask for Ah Yut, my people laugh in their sleeves, and say: 'No savvy Ah Yut.' Which is true; for, as you well know, 'Ah Yut' is not a name at all, the *Ah* being a meaningless syllable, and *Yut* signifying merely *Number 1*. And because many Chinese families do not name their children, but merely number them as they come—Number 1, Number 2, Number 3, and so on, there are many of us in Chinatown known as *Ah Yut, Ah Kee* or *Ah Sam;* and, hence the foreign devils cannot find us unless they know our family name."

"But why should the police ever ask for one of the family of Mock?" cried Mock Don Yuen, sternly.

"That is more than I can tell," replied the other, shaking his head and clicking his tongue. "They are always asking stupid questions about smuggled opium, or slave girls, or other insignificant matters. As though I knew anything! Or would tell if I did! The foreign devil police are very meddlesome, honourable cousin!"

With the toe of his white-stockinged foot, Mock Don Yuen was thoughtfully tracing the embroidery on his slippers, which, of course, he had removed on entering. Suddenly, he looked up:

"This *pin yen* that I am to deliver for you; does

it bear the Customs stamp of the *fan quai* Government?"

"The opium is stamped," lied Ah Yut glibly. "I would not bring shame on our family name by dealing in any other."

"Then it is all settled. Tell me what I am to do and say."

"You are to come here to-night and put on my coat and cap. You are to carry twenty-five cans of opium in a canvas sack around your waist beneath your blouse. In the rear doorway of the *Great Fragrancy Peanut Store* you will find a foreign devil waiting. He has a dark beard on his upper lip, although he is not yet forty years of age; and he wears a soft, black hat. He will say: 'Did you bring the *lichee* nuts?' That is what the foreign devils call our *lichee* because it has a shell like a nut, although as anyone knows, it is a delicious fruit. You will answer, 'Yes; do you wish to buy?' If he answers, 'Yes,' you will hand him the sack of opium and he will give you the $500. He will not examine the opium, for he trusts me; but you must cleverly count the money without offending him. If the sum is correct, bring it to me at once. That is all."

"It shall be done," promised Mock Don Yuen. He put on his slippers, and arose.

"Ch'a! Ch'a!" bellowed Ah Yut. "Chan Fah, why do you stare at me like a gawking foreign devil in Fish Alley? Must I remind you to serve my cousin with the parting cup of tea?"

The girl started sharply, then moved across the

room to the tea-poy. Selecting one of the finest guest bowls, a tiny Swatow cup, she filled it with fragrant Sou-chong tea; and, holding the bowl in both hands, she bowed her head and offered the parting cup.

With courtly grace, Mock Don Yuen extended both hands (for only the rude foreigners use but one hand when accepting a gift) and in taking the tiny bowl, his fingers touched the girl's, and she looked up quickly and their eyes met. But little Chan Fah found the man's gaze very disconcerting, and she bowed her head again and drew her hands away so suddenly that some of the tea was spilled.

"*Haie!*" growled Ah Yut. "You are very awkward!"

At the door, by the reed mat, Mock Don Yuen turned and looked around. Chan Fah had gone into her room. Lee So, the principal wife, was fanning the charcoal fire for the evening meal. Jue Yoke, the secondary wife, was still sewing. Ah Din sat by the table, munching sugared apricot seeds, and picking with his long forenail at a worn spot in the oil-cloth. Leaning on his elbow, Ah Yut was watching the man at the door, and smiling inscrutably.

"May Yee Ling, the god of medicine, and Kwun Yam, the goddess of mercy, grant you speedy recovery," said Mock Don Yuen, bowing.

"Walk slowly, illustrious cousin," said Ah Yut.

Mock Don Yuen tucked his hands into his long sleeves, and turned down Dupont Street.

"Ah Yut is a great fraud," he meditated. "The bowl of his pipe is warm. He is full of opium; and

when one is full of opium, one is not sick. And if my cousin's bones are bad it is because they are full of wickedness. There is something wrong. My contemptible cousin has the mouth of a Buddha, the heart of a snake. I wonder how much little Chan Fah knows about this? I shall have to meditate well—'be calm—and spacious.' That was the Master's way."

IV

"Chan Fah, do you not know it is very wrong for you to come alone to my room?" Mock Don Yuen frowned severely, but his voice was gentle.

With her jewelled hands, Chan Fah shook out the folds of her fur-trimmed coat as though better to cover the knees of her silken trousers; but she made no reply.

"The women of our people are becoming as bold as the women of the foreign devils," went on Mock Don Yuen, musingly. "They want to wear clothes that fit, which as every one knows is very immodest. They go on the street alone, and they speak to male acquaintances; and they want to select their husbands themselves instead of having their parents do it for them. *Ts! Ts!* I cannot understand such things!"

Very shyly, Chan Fah looked up at the man.

"I know, honourable sir, that our people teach that such things are very immoral; but, truly sir, what wrong have I done? Besides, I have come to warn you."

A light flickered in Mock Don Yuen's deep, dark

eyes. "To warn me?" he echoed, softly. "Does your foster-father know about this?"

"No, no! It is to warn you against him that I am here. He has laid a trap for you."

Mock Don Yuen looked steadily at the girl, and she lowered her gaze and began nervously picking the flowered edges of her silk jacket.

"Things unsaid need never be accounted for, little flower. Do you really wish to betray your father?"

The girl looked up quickly. "He is not my father, sir, as you well know. And besides, he is a—a jackal; he lives off the earnings of others, then snaps at the hand that gives him his rice. He beats his wives and he beats me. He beat his own daughter, Peach Blossom, until she ran away to the American mission."

"She must have been a very disobedient girl," declared the other; "and her kind and indulgent father should have beaten her on the feet with bamboo until she could not run away."

"She was not disobedient, honourable sir. He whipped her because she was homely and black, like him, and because the marriage broker could not get a good price for her. And now he strikes me oftener because he thinks that I whispered to Peach Blossom about the mission, which I did; and he is trying to—to sell me."

Mock Don Yuen's eyes flashed wide.

"To sell you as a wife, or as a—a slave?"

"What is the difference, sir? Are not wives slaves to their husbands?"

To that, Mock Don Yuen apparently had no reply.

He was very thoughtful for a space; then he drew out his gold watch and looked at it. It was nearly half-past ten.

"How much does your honourable father ask for you, Chan Fah?" he inquired, with assumed disinterest.

"Two thousand dollars gold."

"That is a lot of money. With half that, one would be rich in China. Tell me, Chan Fah: were you born in the Middle Kingdom?"

"Yes, honourable sir."

"What is your province?"

"Kwangsi."

"What was the moment of your birth?"

"Alas, I do not know."

"*Ts! Ts!* How stupid! How came you to be my cousin's foster-daughter?"

There was a silence. A wistful look crept into the girl's eyes, and she toyed absent-mindedly with her Khoten jade bracelet. When she finally folded her hands in her lap and, with bowed head, began speaking in musical Cantonese, it seemed to be more to herself than to Mock Don Yuen:

"It seems such a very long, long time ago, honourable sir. I was a child in Wu-chau, which is on the River Si, to the west of the city of Canton. In my father's hut were six mouths; and, alas, all were girls. My parents seemed to hate me because I was not a boy, and one cannot blame them, for they were very poor and needed a hand to come with the mouth. They did not teach me book-learning or embroidery,

and seemed never to notice me except when I would ask if I might learn *The Classic for Girls* with my sisters; and then my mother would become very angry and beat me, and I would run away to the river and cry and wish I were dead. Thus I came to love the bright water-lilies and the leaping carp more than I did my parents; and . . ."

"That was very wicked!" broke in Mock Don Yuen. "A child's greatest duty is to love its parents. Filial piety is the root of virtue and the stem from which instruction in the moral principle springs. So says the Master."

"You speak truly, honourable sir; but it is difficult to love when one is always hungry and neglected. I can scarcely remember my father, for he was a follower of the river and seldom home. But I can never forget that night the great, black storm came, nor the long, bitter days we waited and watched for my father's boat which never again returned to us. And in those lonely days, another mouth came to our hut, and it was a boy; but it was still-born; and my poor mother wrapped it in an old piece of matting and threw it into the river that its bones might be with those of its father. Long ere the harvest we had not even a bowl of millet a day to eat; and so, on the day that Ah Yut came to our hut, my starving mother sold me to him for a mat of rice. Soon after, we got on a fire-devil boat and crossed the great sea to the land of the white foreign devils; and here I have had enough to eat, and my foster-father does not beat me any more than my mother did, but I do not want to be a

nei jen. I do not want to live always under a roof like a shackled pig; and I often wish I could play again like a child among the lilies in the cool, shallow water by the river bank. . . ."

Mock Don Yuen, as though in reverie, was staring at the big bronze vase that stood on the wicker stand in the corner. He started suddenly, and turned to the girl.

"I am afraid, Chan Fah," he said, musingly, "that you are as ungrateful as you are—beautiful. But you have forgotten: you came to warn me."

And then Chan Fah told rapidly what she knew about Ah Yut's scheme; that Ah Yut was not ill; that he was almost positive that whoever delivered the opium would be arrested; and that he had tricked Mock Don Yuen into promising to make the delivery for him.

"You must not have anything to do with it, honourable sir," she pleaded, finally; "for if you do, you will surely go to prison."

Mock Don Yuen meditated a moment in grave silence. Then he said:

"On the contrary, I shall go through with the plans I have laid."

Chan Fah caught her breath in a little gasp. She looked up at the man.

"Yes, little flower, I shall keep my promise," repeated Mock Don Yuen, kindly. "And now walk your way slowly, for it is nearing the time I must go. In the meantime, do nothing, say nothing. Leave all to me. *Ho hang la!* I hope you have a safe walk!"

Chan Fah arose. She seemed dazed. She looked up into Mock Don Yuen's face as though to speak, then turned suddenly and left.

The instant the door had closed behind her, a swift change came over Mock Don Yuen. The severe lines of his thin, dark face softened, and his deep eyes shone like burnished bronze. He sprang to the window and watched, hungrily; and when he saw her, a spot of bright colour moving through the drab street, he flung out his hands as though to draw her back to him.

"Beautiful Chan Fah!" he breathed. "Little flower of the family of Chan! Thou art fair as the moon o'er the hills of Kwan-lun, and thy heart is as pure as clearest jade. . . ."

V

It was half-past ten when Mock Don Yuen again turned into the smelly, dismal stairway that led to the room of his cousin. He found Ah Yut still in bed, and looking very ill indeed. Both his wives were standing by his bedside industriously fanning their honourable husband with Swatow fans of sandalwood. Chan Fah sat by the table munching rice cakes and idly turning the pages of an old yellowed book, on whose right-hand cover was a writhing dragon belching from his gaping, red jaws, scrawly characters which signified: *The Dissipation of Sorrows.*

Mock Don Yuen picked up a stool, put it close to the foot of his cousin's couch, and seated himself. He did not remove his slippers.

"It is time for me to keep the appointment for you, unfortunate cousin," he said.

"And everything is ready," replied Ah Yut. "Under my couch where you are sitting is the opium in the canvas belt."

When Mock Don Yuen bent over to grope beneath the couch for the opium belt, neither Ah Yut nor his wives could see what happened. Thus, only Chan Fah saw her father's cousin quickly slip a small package from beneath the folds of his blouse and place it far back under the couch. But Chan Fah was not only a Chinese; she was a woman. And so her face did not betray even to Mock Don Yuen that she had seen.

The opium belt was a long, narrow sack of canvas. It was full of little, heavy boxes, each about twice the size of a deck of playing cards; and each box fitted side by side in the sack. The end had been securely fastened with a lacing of fibre.

"Do not take time to open the sack," cautioned Ah Yut. "It is not necessary now; and when you meet the foreign devil there will not be time. Give him the sack just as it is. You are to wear that coat and cap there on the wall."

A few minutes later, when Mock Don Yuen stood by the door bowing his leave, he had the sack of opium securely fastened around his waist beneath his blouse; and over that, and over his queue, he wore Ah Yut's long, black coat. The soiled cap was drawn tightly down over his head; and his queue arched from under the cap in barbaric fashion, then seemed

to be trying to crawl even farther beneath the old coat. And now he looked not at all like Mock Don Yuen, the learned scholar, but very much like Ah Yut, the dealer in smuggled opium.

. . . . . .

Mock Don Yuen turned the gas very low, and stood with one hand on the door-knob of his room. He said to Ah Din:

"Do not answer a question until it is asked twice. Then say nothing, do nothing, save what I have instructed you. When you have spoken that, keep your tongue in your cheek. Walk your way now, Ah Din, for it is the time."

Very quietly, Mock Don Yuen opened the door. Ah Din, wearing his father's long, black coat, and cap, glided swiftly and silently down the deserted hallway, and out on to Dupont Street.

Mock Don Yuen followed. When they were near the rear of the *Great Fragrancy Peanut Store,* he concealed himself in the shadow of a pile of old cuttlefish catties; and there he saw and heard what happened. He saw Ah Din slowly approach a shadowy figure standing in the doorway.

"Do you wish to buy *lichee* nuts?" asked the boy.

"Y-e-s," came the halting reply. "Who are you?"

"I am Ah Yut's boy. My father is very sick and could not come. But I have the package for you."

"Fine!" The man drew something from his pocket, stepped closer to Ah Din, and said clearly:

"Here is the money. Give me the stuff!"

Ah Din took the money, and handed over the canvas belt.

The man raised his voice triumphantly. "All right, Bremer!" Another figure darted quickly from the shadows, and seized Ah Din by the arm.

"Whassa matter?" cried Ah Din. "Whassa matter?"

"Nothing *a*-tall!" exclaimed Government Officer Bremer. "Everything came off just lovely! Steve, cut that canvas sack while I frisk this bird." Swiftly, he ran a practised hand over the boy. "Here's the marked money," he said, taking the package that had been given Ah Din, and putting it into his own pocket. "But he's clean, otherwise."

Bremer's assistant had ripped the opium belt and was counting the cans. "Twenty-five five-tael cans!" he ejaculated. "And not a sign of a stamp on a one of them!"

"Some catch, eh!" cried Bremer. He pried the lid off one of the tins and turned his flash-light on the black, gummy contents. He raised the can to his nostrils. "It's the stuff, Steve: the real dope!"

Bremer turned to Ah Din.

"Boy, we're going to be easy on you if you tell the truth; but if you don't, you'll go to the hoosegaw for a long, long time. Savvy that? Now tell me." And he asked a great many questions, to all of which Ah Din replied firmly: "I do not know." And finally Dan Bremer became angry.

"You're lying, Ah Din, and I know it! I'll give you just one more chance. Tell me: Has your dad got any more stuff cached away?"

Ah Din appeared to hesitate for an instant, then he said: "If I tell you, you will inform my father, and he will beat me and drive me away from home."

But both officers swore they would never tell Ah Din's father nor anyone else; and so, finally, Ah Din said:

"There are four more cans like these under the foot of my father's couch."

. . . . . .

Mock Don Yuen sat on the stool by Ah Yut's couch and calmly wiped his glasses with his green silk handkerchief.

"It was this way, cousin," he explained, before Ah Yut could frame a question. "I met your boy, Ah Din, in the street; and, on reflection, I concluded that whereas the foreign devil might refuse to deal with me, a stranger, he would not decline to deal with your son. Knowing how much you desired to get the money quickly, I had Ah Din meet the foreign devil in . . ."

Ah Yut forgot his bones. With a gasping cry, he sat up in bed. His mouth opened and shut like a carp's; but before he could speak, heavy steps sounded on the stairway. The door was unceremoniously thrown open.

Dan Bremer paused on the threshold and looked around. He saw only Ah Yut and the two wives. Mock Don Yuen and Chan Fah were not in the room.

"Hello, Ah Yut! Gotchu this time, eh? Come in, boys. Get hold of that bird while I take a look-see." The Government officer stepped to the foot of Ah

Yut's couch, while two officers of the Chinatown plain-clothes squad went to the side of Ah Yut.

Whereupon, Lee So, suddenly comprehending, set up a great cry. Lee So had seen these same officials many times, and knew just what to do. To Occidental ears, her high-pitched, falsetto wailing was but the meaningless babbling of a frightened, hysterical woman, but to every Oriental ear within the sound of her voice, it meant this: *"Aih-yah!* The foreign devil officials are here! They are seeking unstamped opium! Jung Quan! Kim Yick Lung! Hang Poo! Ah Lee! Ng Sheong! Do you hear me? The Custom-house devils are here after unstamped opium! *Aih-yah . . .* !"

"Aw, shut up!" ordered one of the squadmen. And Lee So, having delivered her warning, which was already being carried by others to every den in Chinatown, promptly subsided.

From the camphorwood chest, Dan Bremer fished a certain letter, and held it up for all to see. "Here's that decoy we fixed up, boys," he said. "Some trick that! Ah Yut, you savvy Mo Lung one good flend yours long time, eh? And say, we got those twenty-five cans of mud you gave to Ah Din." While he talked, and pretended to search further, Bremer had one eye on the two women and the other on the rectangle of darkness by the foot of Ah Yut's couch.

"Whassamallee?" demanded Ah Yut. "I no give Ah Din op'um."

"No? Then who did?"

"I dunno. Mebbeso—mebbeso my cousin, Mock Don Yuen."

"Cousin!" snorted Bremer. "Huh, that's what they all say! Hey, what's this?" He thrust an arm under the couch and drew out a package wrapped in a Chinese newspaper. Bremer tore the paper away and disclosed four opium cans, without stamps. He pried the lid off one of the cans, and smelled the black, gummy contents. "Same stuff!" he exclaimed. "What about this, Ah Yut?"

Ah Yut was staring open-mouthed at the four cans, and his long, bony hands were clutching the blankets so tightly he shook from head to foot. To Bremer's repeated demand, he finally replied, surlily: "No savvy!" And then, after the manner of his race, he relapsed into sullen silence.

At that juncture, another officer came into the room from the hallway that led up from the alley. He announced that no one had gone out that way.

"All right, boys," said Bremer. "I think we've got all the stuff. Get that bird down to the wagon while I take a look around this other room. I heard someone in there." Bremer strode heavily across the floor to the door of Chan Fah's room. There he halted.

In the doorway stood little Chan Fah. Apparently she had been in the act of retiring, for she had hastily thrown a silken scarf over her bare shoulders. With one hand she held the scarf, and with the other arm, nude, and beautiful as an ivory carving, she barred the doorway. She looked up at the officer, her dark eyes burning with mingled humiliation and defiance.

"You must not intrude, sir," said Chan Fah, in

perfect English. "And, anyway, there is no opium in here."

Dan Bremer stared at the girl as though at a vision. Then he doffed his hat.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "And I'll take you at your word. Come on, boys!"

When they were gone, and the sound of their heavy tread had died away, Mock Don Yuen, with his usual calm dignity, walked from Chan Fah's room, and, looking neither to the right nor the left, crossed the room to the door.

Chan Fah sprang to his side and caught him by the sleeve.

"Hold, Mock Don Yuen!" she cried. "Was it for this that I warned you? I did not mean that you should get your vengeance by having Ah Din sent to prison. I saw you put that package under the couch; but I never suspected that you were plotting to have my foster-father taken away from us. And now—now they are both in prison! What shall we do? I—I was a fool to let you hide in my room! Why did I do it? Why—why didn't I tell the Custom-house officials about you?" And Chan Fah covered her face with her hands and wept tears of anger and humiliation.

Mock Don Yuen looked down at Chan Fah, weeping, then at Ah Yut's two wives, staring stupidly at him.

"Kung Fu Tse was right," sighed Mock Don Yuen, as he turned to the door. "Women are hard to manage."

VI

It was nearing the hour of ten of the following morning when Mock Don Yuen, following the direction of a surly guard, walked down one of the halls in the Federal ward of the city prison, and stopped in front of a certain cell. It was gloomy in the corridor and cells, and it was with some difficulty that Mock Don Yuen made out the face of Ah Yut glaring at him through the bars.

"Estimable cousin," greeted Mock Don Yuen gravely, "how are your honourable bones?"

"Haie-e-e!" Ah Yut hissed venomously. *"May boiling oil be dripped on your naked body!"*

"And why do you curse me? I tried to help you; and nearly went to prison, myself. You lied to me when you said the opium bore the Customs stamps. You have brought all this on yourself by your own wickedness. I feel very little sorrow for you, but very much for poor Ah Din. He is but a boy."

"Have you seen him?" demanded Ah Yut, quickly.

"I saw him, but the waters of sorrow were flowing down his cheeks and he could not talk with me."

Ah Yut groaned.

"And so I came to see you, to ask if I could help you."

"There is nothing that can be done," declared Ah Yut, gloomily. "Only a few minutes ago one of our *tong* brought in a foreign devil lawyer whom I was going to buy to prove that I am not guilty; but when he heard about the case he said that because the

officers found the unstamped opium in my possession all I can do is to admit I am guilty and go to prison. He wanted fifty dollars. I asked him why I should pay a lawyer and go to prison when one can just as easily go to prison without a lawyer; and he became very angry and swore, and was gone in about six flaps of a slipper."

"You spoke wisely, cousin. But why not pay the foreign devil officials to release you? That would save the Government the expense of keeping you in prison."

"I—I have thought of that," replied Ah Yut, after a moment's reflection. "I am sure that if I paid them secretly before I have to go before the lesser Magistrate they would not write anything about me or Ah Din in their books, and would let us free at once. But, alas, I have no money."

"And no way to borrow?"

Ah Yut shook his head. "The elders of my *tong* are provoked with me, and refuse to help. *Haie!* They are very lacking in benevolence, and their livers are no larger than Swatow teacups!"

"Then there is nothing to do but to stay in prison," concluded Mock Don Yuen; "for you cannot expect me to lend you a single *cash* after the trick you tried to play on me. It is no fault of yours that I am not in prison now. This is a great disgrace on our honourable family name; and it is very hard on poor Ah Din, very hard. Something should be done. If you but had about five thousand taels of silver, I might go to the foreign devil officials and secretly buy your

freedom. If you even had a slave girl to sell——" And Mock Don Yuen shook his head, and clicked his tongue, and turned as though to walk his way.

"Stay, cousin, stay!" breathed the man behind the bars. "There is—Chan Fah."

"What about her?" asked the other, indifferently.

"I could sell her either as a slave or as a wife."

Mock Don Yuen appeared to weigh this suggestion.

"What is her age?" he asked at length.

"She has been eating nearly twenty years. I should get two thousand dollars gold for her, but would take less if I could sell her at once. And maybe that would be enough to buy my freedom."

"Yours, perhaps; but what of Ah Din?"

"I could sell Ah Din as a slave, maybe, for what it will cost to buy his freedom; and since the foolish foreign devils have a law against selling slaves, just as they have a law against nearly everything else, Ah Din could run away after awhile and his owner would not dare do anything about it."

"For the sake of poor Ah Din, I hope you have good fortune in your efforts," said Mock Don Yuen. And again he turned to leave.

"Wait, cousin, wait! I—I ask you to help me." Ah Yut's tone indicated that he had come to a sudden decision. "The one who goes secretly to the foreign devil officials to buy my freedom must choose his words well. Who can do that better than you? Will you attend to the matter for me, Mock Don Yuen?"

Deliberately, Mock Don Yuen drew the collar of his blouse about his neck, for the corridor was cold;

and for about the time it takes to clean the bowl of an opium pipe, he was silent. Then he said:

"Not for you, but for the sake of our honourable family name, I will do what I can. Sign a paper giving Chan Fah to me as a wife; then sign another paper giving Ah Din to me as a slave. I will then advance what money is necessary, and will see the officials within the hour."

Ah Yut was slow to make reply.

"You drive a sharp bargain, honourable cousin," he said, finally.

"You tried to get me into gaol; and I trusted you. I am trying to get you out of gaol; and I do not care whether you trust me or not, for it is cold and dismal in this prison and I am eager to walk my way. Remember, I promise nothing except that I will go to the officials and see what can be done. I will do nothing unless you sign those papers to protect me against any more of your lying tricks. Make your choice quickly." Mock Don Yuen turned and looked back down the corridor to the door where he had entered.

Ah Yut pressed his face against the bars and gave his cousin an evil look. In a distant part of the gaol a door clanged, and a gruff voice growled a sharp command. A man cursed vilely. A woman raised her voice in maudlin song.

Ah Yut shuddered.

"I will sign."

When the papers had been signed by both Ah Yut and Mock Don Yuen, with solemn oaths, and Mock

Don Yuen had walked his way, Ah Yut sat in a dark corner of his cell and muttered exultantly: "He is a greater fool than I thought. He does not know that when he tries to bribe the Government officials he will be arrested. And what good will those papers be to him when he is in prison?"

A few minutes later, Government Officer Bremer received a mysterious telephone call. Bremer afterward described it as "some educated Chink talking like an old book"; but he got the drift of what the speaker was saying. In a moment, Bremer was hurrying down the dismal third-floor corridor of the old Appraisers' Building, headed for the Customs laboratory. He rushed up to where the chemist was working, and flung down the twenty-five cans he had bought from Ah Din, and the four he had found beneath Ah Yut's couch.

"Say, what the devil is this stuff, anyway?" he demanded.

The chemist wiped his hands on his canvas apron and deliberately studied the contents of the cans as Bremer tore off the lids. "I should say," began the man of test-tubes and retorts—he had a most annoying habit of groping for his words—"that it—ah—looks like smoking opium, and it—ah—smells like it." He dipped up a bit of the black, gummy mass on his spatula, held it over the gas flame, and studied the action of the heat. Gravely, he laid the spatula down, dipped up some of the sticky substance with his finger, and tasted it.

"I should say," the chemist concluded unconcernedly,

"that you—ah—have here about—ah—thirty cents worth of New Orleans black strap molasses!"

VII

Groaning, and leaning heavily on the arm of Ah Din, a very sick Chinese laboured slowly up the creaking stairs. Every step was torture; for the cell in the city prison had been chill and damp, and Ah Yut's rheumatism, which had not afflicted him since the rainy season, had taken a cruel grip on his limbs overnight.

Lee So opened the door for them. There was real solicitude in her eyes. "What is the trouble, honourable husband? Did they beat you?"

"*Aih-yah!* I am dying in my bones," moaned Ah Yut. "Go quickly and borrow Ng Sheong's bottle of *tin bin hui sup kui fung sarm shea peuk tsau.*"

"*Ts!* I will not! How can you joke? Is it a laughing matter to spend the night in prison?" And Lee So grinned, and turned away.

Ah Yut cursed his principal wife because she said he was joking about his bones; then he cursed Jue Yoke, his secondary wife, because she said nothing at all. Meanwhile, Ah Din helped his father across the floor and eased him down on his bunk. There Ah Yut lay, his eyes shut very tight, and his mouth open wide, while his groans filled the house.

"You fooled Mock Don Yuen last night, honourable husband," spoke up Lee So; "but I don't see why you now try to fool us."

Chan Fah came out of her room and stood by the

side of her foster-father, but she said nothing. Ah Yut glared at her a moment; then, in jerky sentences, mingled with groans, he told of the bargain he had made, and of the papers he had signed.

Lee So was silent for a long moment. Then she shook her head sadly and clicked her tongue. She looked around for Ah Din; but Ah Din was gone.

"Chan Fah, do you hear what your honourable father says?" she asked quietly. "You have been betrothed to Mock Don Yuen."

Chan Fah did not raise her head to make reply.

"It will be good riddance," went on Lee So; "for you are a great pig; but it is a shame that after feeding you all these years your venerable father could not have made a better bargain. *Haie!* He should have stayed in prison!"

Little Chan Fah paid no heed. She was betrothed! And to Mock Don Yuen! Her mother had announced the betrothal; and now it was Chan Fah's duty to run to her room to hide, and weep.

Slowly Chan Fah went to her room. With bowed head she crossed the floor and stood by the window. "I must cry," she told herself. "I must cry because I am soon to walk out of my parents' door forever." And then her eyes lighted on her *p'ei p'a* which lay on the table, and she picked it up and seated herself on the stool by the window just as she had done on many a lonely, moonlit evening. Her dark eyes were as bright as gems, and she was very beautiful in the cold light that streamed through the window. "I must weep," she repeated; and then, very gently, her

jewelled fingers swept across the strings of the Chinese guitar, and very softly she began an old, old Chinese ballad:

> "Surely there sings no lighter heart
> Than mine beneath the sky . . .
> . . . And it's oh, to be galloping, galloping home
> Where my dream-born children are . . ."

. . . . . .

Mock Don Yuen reclined at ease on his opium bunk. There was oil in his lamp, there was opium in his horn jar, and his pipe was warm. And safely hidden about his rooms were twenty-five cans of first-grade Macao opium.

Unceremoniously, Ah Din rushed into the room. He jerked off his cap, but forgot about his slippers.

"Honourable sir, I did just as you told me," cried the boy, in angry Cantonese; "and I spent a night in gaol. So did my father. And what have you done? You made my father sign papers giving Chan Fah to you as a wife, and——"

Abruptly, the sizzling of the poppy drug ceased. Mock Don Yuen spoke sharply:

"Does Chan Fah object?"

"Chan Fah is very sorry to leave her home and her kind, indulgent parents, sir. And that is bad enough without you making my father sign papers giving me to you as a slave. Sir, they don't do such things in this country. Wasn't it enough that you got all the opium?"

"Your father sold you to me, and that settles it,"

said Mock Don Yuen kindly. "Of course, since you are my *hsiao ya t'ou,* I shall have to clothe and feed you, which will be a great expense. But, being my little slave, you must do as I say."

"What do you wish me to do?" asked Ah Din, cautiously.

"Ah Din, your head is as empty as an up-turned rice bowl," smiled Mock Don Yuen. "You need learning. On the seventh of the next moon, you are to begin your studies at that honourable college of American business."

Ah Din's almond eyes grew wider and wider, and his mouth opened and shut like a hungry carp's. Finally he dropped to his knees and struck his forehead nine times on the tiger-fur rug.

"Master, I am your humble and insignificant slave forever and forever," he said, in his best Cantonese.

The pipe ceased its fitful spluttering. Looking at the man on the opium bunk, Ah Din saw that his deep dark eyes were wide, and glowing like polished bronze, and that his thin, priest-like face was now serene and tranquil. When Mock Don Yuen spoke, it was in the strangely musical intonations of the Cantonese, and his voice was deep and resonant:

"'While the vulgar—fret—a gentleman is always—calm—and spacious.' . . . Yes, there is wisdom . . . in the Master's words. . . ."

THE WEDDING OF CHAN FAH

I

Lee So, the principal wife of Mock Ah Yut, heard her husband's shuffling step in the hallway, and opened the door for him

"Aih!" cried Ah Yut. *"May the rotting bones of your father's ancestors be rapped with hammers!* Must you always jerk the door open just as I reach for the knob?"

"Ts, ts, honourable husband! It was but last night you scolded me because I forgot to open the door for you."

An angry retort came to Ah Yut's tongue, but he silenced it. Lee So had spoken with unusual boldness. There must be a visitor in the house. Ah Yut stepped in, and at what he saw, his nostrils dilated with sudden fury. Lim Toy, that fat marriage broker, whose mouth was always full of gossip, and whose stomach was always full of other people's tea and cakes, sat at the table by Chan Fah.

Since it was the hour of mid-day rice, Lee So began placing dishes on the oilcloth-covered table, while Jue Yoke, the secondary wife, started fanning the charcoal fire. Chan Fah arose quickly. When her foster-father had seated himself on his opium bunk she handed him a bowl of fragrant Chrysanthemum tea. He sipped it

noisily while he meditated on the probable reason for Lim Toy's visit.

"How is your health, venerable sir?" inquired the marriage broker.

Ah Yut glared at her over his tea bowl. "Is that all you came to ask?"

"Oh, no!" Lim Toy took another sugared almond. "I came to tell you that I have found an excellent husband for your foster-daughter, Chan Fah."

Ah Yut stopped with the tea bowl at his lips. His slant eyes widened, then narrowed to mere slits of jet. Was it possible that the marriage broker had not heard of Chan Fah's betrothal to Mock Don Yuen?

Ah Yut had certainly heard enough of it! Since Chan Fah was not only a very pretty girl, but was also well educated, Ah Yut had counted on getting at least $2,000 betrothal money from one of the rich merchants of San Francisco's Chinatown. To give her to Mock Don Yuen merely for getting out of gaol had caused Ah Yut to lose much face. How he had racked his brain for some way to evade that hateful contract!

It suddenly occurred to Ah Yut that the marriage broker either did not know that Chan Fah had been betrothed, or she knew of some way Ah Yut could slip out of his bargain with Mock Don Yuen. Eager to save his face, and to profit by it, if possible, Ah Yut chose to believe the latter. He set the tea bowl on the table and reached for his opium pipe.

"When you speak of finding a husband for Chan Fah it saddens me very much," he said. "Never have

I thought of her walking out of my door. She is my *Hundred Thousand of Gold;* and I could not bear to part with her."

He turned to Chan Fah. "Go to your room at once!"

Chan Fah's great dark eyes were on Ah Yut in puzzled wonder. She was a very attractive girl in her Chinese way. Her embroidered jacket and trousers were of the finest Hang-chiu silk. Since she was yet a maid, her glossy, black hair was plaited in a queue with gold and jade ornaments. Her earrings were of the finest Yunnan jade, and her face had the beauty and purity of old ivory. She arose at her foster-father's command, hesitated as though to speak, then with bowed head went to her room.

"What you say is true," Lim Toy granted, although she knew it was false; "but one owes something to one's children. And I have found a very rich husband for Chan Fah."

"Perhaps so," said Ah Yut, reaching for his little *hop toy* of opium.

"It is Lee Bow Art, the son of Lee Fong."

Ah Yut paused with the *yen hok* almost in the opium. He changed his mind and began scraping the pipe-bowl with the flat end of the opium needle.

"Of course, Lee Fong is not so rich as some think," went on Lim Toy, divining Ah Yut's thoughts. "Still he could make a very good betrothal present. And although I believe Chan Fah has never seen Lee Bow Art, he has seen her many times. Often when Chan Fah went into the store of Lee Fong to buy preserved

dragon-eye fruit, Lee Bow Art watched her from behind his father's latticed counting room. He would make a very good husband for Chan Fah."

"I know him! *Haie!* He is as ugly as a toad and has the manners of a pig. I shall ask a very large present. Not that I want the money myself. It will all be returned to Lee Bow Art through clothing and jewellery I shall buy for Chan Fah's trousseau."

"Yes, that is the custom," admitted Lim Toy, although she knew Ah Yut had no such intention. "Well, since you think favourably of the matter, give me Chan Fah's age; and when I have seen the astrologer I will return, and you may name the sum you consider a suitable present."

"I will name it now," said Ah Yut, laying down his pipe. "I don't propose to have you here all the time gossiping with my wives."

He wrote the girl's name and date of birth on a piece of paper.

"I shall ask a betrothal present of $2,000," said Ah Yut, handling this paper to the marriage broker. "I will pay your fee if the matter is arranged at once; if you are as slow as usual I shall probably change my mind and not marry Chan Fah at any price."

Lim Toy took the paper and walked her way in haste. She went straightway to the store of Lee Fong, told Lee Bow Art of the matter, and had him write down his name and birth date. She took these two pieces of rice paper to the astrologer. It was four o'clock when the marriage broker again climbed the stairs to the home of Ah Yut.

"Venerable Mock Ah Yut, the astrologer finds that the birth dates of Chan Fah and Lee Bow Art agree and that good fortune will attend their marriage. But Lee Fong says all he will pay is $1,750."

Ah Yut pretended to be very angry, and he threatened to break off negotiations; but all the time he was thinking that $1,750 from Lee Fong was better than nothing at all from Mock Don Yuen.

He leaned forward and spoke quietly. "Of course you know that Chan Fah is already betrothed to Mock Don Yuen. How does Lee Bow Art propose to deal with him?"

Lim Toy chuckled. "That is simple. Everyone knows that when Mock Don Yuen slipped out of that trap he took with him your twenty-five cans of smuggled opium."

"Why remind me of something I cannot forget?"

"Well, Lee Bow Art has written to the Customs officers saying that Mock Don Yuen is a smuggler and telling them to go quickly to his rooms and search. They will find the opium and take Mock Don Yuen to prison."

"How can Lee Bow Art do such a vulgar thing? I would like to see Mock Don Yuen in prison; but since when do our people run to the white officials with tales? We tell the foreign devils nothing; no, not even about our worst enemies. *Haie!* It would be more honourable to hire a hatchetman to wait for Mock Don Yuen some night in the *Alley of Lingering Shadows!*"

"True. But the younger generation does not see

things that way. And anyway, the thing is done. There is no reason why you should not profit by it."

"Very well," said Ah Yut finally. "It is none of my affair. Here is the letter of the three generations, naming the parents, the grand-parents, and the great-grand-parents of Chan Fah. I shall expect the same regarding Lee Bow Art without delay.

When the marriage broker had gone, Chan Fah walked boldly from her room and approached her foster-father.

"Honourable father, are you really going to betroth me to Lee Bow Art?"

"Have I not said so?"

"Yes; but you also said only a few days ago that I had been betrothed to Mock Don Yuen."

"What is that to you?" cried Ah Yut angrily. "You are to marry Lee Bow Art, the son of Lee Fong, the rich merchant."

"But——"

"Silence!" roared Ah Yut. Then, seeing that Chan Fah's eyes were flashing with rebellious anger, he adopted another course. "Is it any of my fault that Mock Don Yuen broke his word with me? He says he does not want you. He prefers his old books. He asked me to find someone else for you. I have done so. *Ts, ts!* Marriages are a nuisance!"

For about the time it takes to recite *The Prayer of a Maiden for her Absent Lover,* Chan Fah stared at Ah Yut. Then, slowly, and with bowed head, she went to her room. She crossed the floor and stood by the window, looking down at the shuffling throng on Dupont

Street, which she scarcely saw, for the waters of sorrow filled her eyes. After a time she took up her Chinese guitar; but when she ran her jewelled fingers across the strings there was no echoing song in her heart. And so she stood there crying silently—not because she was to marry Lee Bow Art, whom she had never seen, nor because she was to walk out of her foster-father's house, of which she had seen quite enough. It was because she had not forgotten, and could never forget, a tall, stately Oriental who, with courtly grace, had bowed and taken from her hands the parting cup of tea, and who now said that he did not want her.

II

It was nearing the hour of evening rice. The sunlight streaming through the west window of Mock Don Yuen's study struck in a splash of gold on the brazen censer that stood on the floor by the tiger-fur rug, and seemed to rest reverently on a gilded scroll that hung on the wall opposite Mock Don Yuen's great carved chair. Seated in this chair, his hands folded across his stomach, his thin, priest-like face impassive, and his long, black eyes fixed on the scroll, Mock Don Yuen studied the characters of the *Ta Hsueh—The Chart of the Great Study*—and meditated gravely on its ancient precepts.

At a small teak-wood table on the other side of the room, where he would not disturb the meditations of Mock Don Yuen, sat an apple-cheeked boy with saucy, black eyes. Before him lay a Business College Arith-

metic, open at percentage and discount; but Ah Din, being hungry, was thinking very little of the things a young banker must know, and very much of what a boy likes to eat. And so it happened that as Mock Don Yuen finished the ninth reading of *The Four Offences Against Politeness* he paused in his meditations and, looking around, saw Ah Din leaning back in his chair, his head perked to one side, bird-like, and his red tongue licking the sweet sap that oozed from a piece of Chinese sugar-cane the boy held poised over his eager face.

"Haie-e!"

Ah Din jumped. The sugar-cane disappeared into the long sleeve of his blouse. He bent over his arithmetic.

For about the time it takes to name *The Four Cardinal Principles,* Mock Don Yuen frowned severely; then a slow smile came to his lips, a smile that lighted warm fires of tenderness in the man's dark eyes and illumined his face with a strange, spiritual beauty.

"Idleness and gluttony are twin sins, my little slave," he said, in musical Cantonese. "The superior man is never guilty of either. It is true that the stomach is the seat of wisdom; but do you think to put wisdom in yours by stuffing it with sugar-cane?"

Ah Din swung his white-stockinged feet beneath the chair and pored over his book as though he had not heard.

"When I forced my loyal cousin, Ah Yut to give you to me as a slave, it was that you might devote your hours to profitable study. You wish to become a

banker. Therefore, learning, honesty, and dignity of carriage should be your object. To attain wisdom, one must think. What is that book you have?"

"Modern Business Arithmetic."

"Modern! *Ts, ts!* Do these white foreign devils see virtue only in modern things? Do they not know that the very best arithmetic you could study is our own *Chou Pei* which was written three thousand years ago?"

"They do not know anything about the Chinese books, sir."

"*Kuai!* What ignorance! Do they not read Kung Fu Tse?"

"They know about him; but they call him Confucius. And they do not think he was so great as one of their own wise men."

"How stupid! What is their wise man's lofty surname?"

"Jesus Christ," said Ah Din, reverently.

"What a strange family name! I have heard it somewhere. Yes, on reflection, I recall it was but yesterday. A white foreign devil was passing Lung Tow's meat shop. He was gawking in the window as they always do. When he fell over a crate of live ducks I heard him mention that wise man's name. Now in this honourable college of American Business, will they teach you the *San Tze Ching?*"

"No, honourable sir."

"*Ts! Ts!* What a stupid school! In the Middle Kingdom every schoolboy memorises the *San Tze Ching*. It is a very elementary book, full of the things

a child should know. I was but a boy of five when I learned it, yet the first sentence is still fresh in my memory: 'Man commences life with a virtuous nature.' "

"That may be true in China, Sir Scholar," ventured Ah Din; "but in this country all the people are 'born in sin.' The white-faced teachers of the Mission say so."

"I do not question the statement," said Mock Don Yuen, nodding his head sagely. "In a land where people do not honour the ancients, there must be much evil. As Kung Fu Tse said: 'The moderns can do nothing more than expound the gems of ancient wisdom!' "

"And that," said Ah Din, with the assurance of youth, "is just why the white foreign devils say China is behind the times—because we are always looking backward. You know the wisdom of China. You have told me all about *The Chart of the Great Study,* some of whose precepts were written four thousand years ago; yet you know very little of what is going on to-day. But"—Ah Din affected a prodigious yawn and dropped into English—"that's nothing in my young life."

Before Mock Don Yuen could make reply, he heard the sound of heavy footsteps in the hall. Someone tried the door, found it locked, and rapped sharply on the panel—not with his knuckles; it was a swift *rat-a-tat* with the ends of his finger-nails.

"*Haie!*" exclaimed Ah Din softly. "Custom-house devils!"

"But the rapping was Chinese."

"That was just to fool you, Sir Scholar. The Custom-house devils learned that trick long ago. What shall I do?"

"Open the door, of course."

"But they will search for unstamped opium. They must know of the twenty-five cans you have hidden in your room."

"What of it?" Mock Don Yuen spoke with firm kindness. "Admit the officials."

Ah Din had already shoved his feet into his slippers. He arose and started for the door; then as the pounding ceased, Ah Din hesitated. A voice in English demanded admittance on threat of breaking down the door. Ah Din delayed no longer.

Three men strode into the room. One of them went straight through to the rear room, one closed the door and stood with his back to it, and the other surveyed the study and its two occupants. Ah Din recognised him as Government Officer Dan Bremer.

"Suey quan hou!" said Bremer sharply. "Government officers. We take a look-see. You catch-em *pin yen,* eh?"

Above anything else under the sun, Ah Din hated the sound of pidgin English. He drew up proudly.

"I do not understand you, sir. Will you be kind enough to speak English?"

Bremer grinned. "Oh, all right, kiddo. We're going to search this place for smuggled opium. Get that?"

"Yes," replied Ah Din; "but I can't say that I wish you luck."

Bremer looked steadily at Mock Don Yuen. The strange Oriental sat very straight in his high-backed chair, calmly wiping his glasses with his green silk handkerchief.

"Who is that man?" asked the official, with some show of respect.

Ah Din told him.

"Does he smoke opium?"

"Four or five pipes a day. There is the lay-out."

Bremer walked to where the lay-out rested on a stool by the opium bunk. The stool was of Chinese ebony inlaid with mother-of-pearl; and the lay-out tray was richly lacquered. Bremer picked up a five-tael can and examined it closely. In the bottom of the can was a small quantity of black, gummy substance. Around the sides of the can, and over the lid, was the Customs stamp.

"First-grade Macao opium, or I'm no judge," muttered Bremer. "I wonder how many times this can has been refilled with smuggled stuff?" He gave Ah Din a knowing wink, but the boy pretended he did not notice. "I'm going to take a look around," concluded the officer, and began searching.

Mock Don Yuen replaced his green silk handkerchief in the left sleeve of his blouse. He laid the glasses on the table; for, although the officers were only foreign devils, Mock Don Yuen could not be so disrespectful as to don the glasses in their presence. He turned to Ah Din.

"Do these officers understand our language?"

"No, Sir Scholar."

"Then do exactly as I say. Sit down at your table. Take up your book. Preserve your tranquillity."

"But, sir, my stomach is cold with fear. My father has no doubt told these officers that you have smuggled opium in your room. They will find it, and you will have to go to prison for a long time."

"I have hidden it," returned Mock Don Yuen quietly. "Let us see if the foxes find the burrow of their prey." As he reached for his long, tasselled tobacco pipe, he saw that Bremer was searching the sandalwood chest. "Hearken to me, Ah Din," Mock Don Yuen went on, placing a pinch of tobacco in the tiny bowl of the pipe; "do not even look at the officers lest they think we fear the result of their search." He lighted the pipe with a burning punk he took from the censer. "You were saying, I believe, that the white foreign devils think we are backward in many things. How can that be? We trace our civilisation back forty centuries."

"I do not know," Ah Din managed to say.

Mock Don Yuen blew the ashes from the bowl and refilled it. The Government officer was sounding the wall above the opium bunk.

"I have observed that the white foreign devils are often very vulgar. It is true that my own life has been spent in fruitless pursuits, unredeemed by a single virtue; yet I was like the Master, Kung Fu Tse: I loved the past, and I questioned it earnestly; I loved learning, and I sought it with simple faith."

The Government officer was taking Mock Don Yuen's

books from the shelves, flipping the pages, and throwing the books on the table.

"So it seems to me they are often lacking in courtesy and knowledge," went on Mock Don Yuen. "In passing one in the street, he insists on turning to his right, when, as anyone knows, one should always turn to the left. I have seen white men lift their hats when they meet a woman of their acquaintance, which, of course, is a very disrespectful thing to do. They have not learned the proper ceremonials."

So speaking, Mock Don Yuen kept his face toward Ah Din, but his eyes were on Bremer. The officer, with rude hand, had raised *The Chart of the Great Study,* and he had found beneath it an opening in the wall that appeared to be an old chimney hole. Bremer looked closely at the crumpled paper that had been stuffed in the hole. It was covered with dust. But the Government officer knew this trick. He removed the paper, and peered into the sooty opening. With a grunt of disgust, he replaced the paper, and dropped the chart back into place.

". . . Which reminds me," Mock Don Yuen was saying; "I have not yet attended to the ceremonials for my marriage to Chan Fah."

Ah Din sat up quickly.

"*Aih!* I had forgotten. Sir Scholar, when I went home after school to get my copy of the *Thousand-word Classic,* I saw the marriage broker, Lim Toy, just going out. Chan Fah was weeping. My father was saying something about a fee. I followed Lim Toy. She went straight to the home of Lee Fong,

who has been trying to buy a wife for that ugly toad he calls his son, Lee Bow Art."

Mock Don Yuen's long eyes widened, then narrowed slowly to mere threads of glittering black.

"You should have told me that matter before," he said severely. "What is the official saying now?"

Bremer had called his men together. "No use, boys," he told them. "The stuff may be here, but we can't find it without tearing the whole place to splinters. I don't intend to do that on an anonymous letter from another Chink. I'd give a dollar to know what they've been chowing about all the time."

A moment later Mock Don Yuen said:

"Go quietly into the hall, Ah Din, and make sure that the Government officers no longer look back."

Ah Din opened the door. A man almost fell into the room. It was Ah Yut.

Mock Don Yuen frowned, and there was an edge to his courteous greeting. "*Ts'ing tso.* Please be seated, estimable cousin."

Ah Yut muttered his thanks. He sat down on the stool Ah Din put out for him, and removed his slippers. He had seen the Government officers leaving and he tried to mask his thoughts from the keen eyes of Mock Don Yuen.

"You are well, venerable cousin?" Mock Don Yuen inquired.

"I am not so well, learned cousin. I was walking for the good of my health; and, passing your door, desired to enter and inquire after your welfare."

"You honour me greatly. I am not yet in prison,

as you observe. Your visit is quite opportune. I was about to call on you. Some filthy scavenger has run with tales to the white officials and told them about the opium I have in my room. Two persons are greatly interested in seeing me go to prison. You are one of them; the other is Lee Bow Art, to whom you have betrothed Chan Fah, although she was already betrothed to me."

"I did not do it," put in Ah Yut stoutly.

"No. You have the heart of a snake, honourable cousin; but I do not believe you would do such a heinous thing. It is more like one of the younger generation, someone who has become vulgar and discourteous by mixing much with the white foreign devils. Yes, it is more like Lee Bow Art," concluded Mock Don Yuen. Then he spoke sharply: "Chan Fah was betrothed to me under the Chinese custom. I shall marry her. The rude feet of a grocer's son shall never tread on my little flower!"

Angrily, Mock Don Yuen strode to *The Chart of the Great Study*. He lifted one corner, removed the crumpled newspaper, and drew up the sleeve of his blouse. Cautiously he thrust his arm down into the chimney as far as he could reach. Unhooking a looped string from a nail that had been driven between the bricks, Mock Don Yuen drew out a sooty canvas bag.

"Here is your smuggled opium," said Mock Don Yuen coldly. "I want none of it. I kept it only to teach you a lesson. But, alas, rotten wood cannot be carved; neither will courtesy avail with such as you.

Now, walk your way. But I warn you: say nothing of this to Lee Bow Art."

When Ah Yut had gone, Mock Don Yuen exchanged his study cap of Hang-chiu silk for a plain mandarin cap of black satin with a single red button.

"What can you do, Sir Scholar?" inquired Ah Din. "My father has already betrothed Chan Fah to Lee Bow Art. They will hasten the wedding. And I do not want Chan Fah to marry that fat toad."

"Preserve your tranquillity, my son. Do not disturb the harmony of our evening meal. Since you are so fond of bamboo sprouts, we shall have a bowl of *mo goo gai soon fan gong*. After which I shall leave you. I must find a foreign devil pawnshop."

Ah Din looked up, puzzled. He started to speak, but for some reason changed his mind and remained silent.

III

When Lee Bow Art's father was advised of the wedding date, as set by the astrologer, he sent the betrothal money—$1,750 in gold—to Ah Yut. The next day he sent other presents of fine tea, *lichee* nuts, preserved dragon-eye fruit, and roasted fowl and pork; and Chan Fah's foster-parents made presents of some very fine Swatow tea-bowls, a grass-seed pillow, a silk bed-curtain, and other household things, sending them to the home of Lee Bow Art's parents. At no time did Chan Fah's parents meet the parents of Lee Bow Art; and, of course, Chan Fah was not to see Lee Bow Art until the wedding day.

None of the parties concerned thought of going to the foreign devil officials for a marriage licence, for such things were unknown in China; and the *fan quai* officials were too busy with more important matters to bother about Chinese weddings. Under the Chinese custom the wedding was complete with the acceptance of the betrothal present, save for one thing: the delivery of the bride to her future husband.

Chan Fah had been taught to read and to do embroidery, and to be saving of rice and flour. She had been drilled in the *Nu Erh Ching* and other girlhood classics; and she knew by heart every word of *The Three Dependencies* and *The Four Virtues,* and the whole duty of a good wife. When Ah Yut sent her to the American school she was very much afraid at first; but since she was quick to learn, and made many friends, she soon came to dislike many of the ways of the Chinese, although still doubting the propriety of some of the ways of her white sisters.

"You are an unfilial little beast," Ah Yut said to Chan Fah on the morning of the wedding day. "Your eyes should be filled with the waters of sorrow because you are to walk out of my house forever; but instead, I hear you singing and laughing and playing love songs on your guitar."

"She cried bitterly the first day, honourable husband," Lee So came to the girl's defence. "She is a good girl, and has worked hard preparing her trousseau. Perhaps she is glad she is to marry a young man like Lee Bow Art instead of Mock Don Yuen."

"You are wrong," spoke up Chan Fah quietly. "I

do not want to marry Lee Bow Art; and it is wrong that I should be forced to marry a man I have never seen."

"He is very rich," championed Ah Yut; "and he is not so bad looking."

"Who cares for his money?" cried Chan Fah. "Must I love a toad because his father put gold in his ugly mouth?"

"But you will be happier with him than with Mock Don Yuen, who has reached the age of forty and cares only for his books——"

"Mock Don Yuen is a gentleman!" Chan Fah broke in, her dark eyes flashing like jewels. "He would be kind to me, and I should be happy with him, even if he were as old as—as the *Mother of Heaven Temple!*" Too angry to say more, Chan Fah stamped her foot as she had seen her white sisters do, then ran to her room.

Before Ah Yut could speak, several of Chan Fah's girl friends came in to see her, as was the custom. When they had gone into Chan Fah's room, Ah Yut sat in moody silence, smoking many pinches of tobacco in his long, tasselled pipe, and meditating on what Chan Fah had said. Perhaps, after all, it would have been more kind to marry her to Mock Don Yuen than to send her to Lee Bow Art, who would not appreciate her and who would no doubt abuse her. This was a disturbing thought. Ah Yut turned at once to his opium pipe, and soon restored his peace and tranquillity.

When Lee So went into Chan Fah's room to pre-

pare her for the wedding, she was not surprised to find the girl lying on her bed, her hands and feet bound with silk cords, and her girl friends laughing and joking and begging Chan Fah not to leave them. Chan Fah took it all in good grace; and, when she had been released, she said not a word while Lee So dressed her in a robe of plain white, which is the Chinese symbol for mourning. Then, because Lee Bow Art was unmarried, and Chan Fah was to have the honour of being his first wife instead of a mere concubine, or secondary wife, Lee So took a band of scarlet cloth and wrapped it about the girl's head.

Chan Fah cried softly when Lee So led her out of the door, and she seemed to be frightened when she saw the musicians in their gay attire, the friends of the family just behind them, the two waiting carriages, and the curious crowd of white people with staring eyes; but when she saw Ah Din by one of the carriages, she raised her head and tried to smile at him through her tears, which puzzled Ah Din very much.

Because there were no red sedan chairs in San Francisco, the top of the hired hack had been covered with a piece of red silk. Chan Fah was placed in this carriage and the door locked. Then Lee So took her place with the friends and relatives between the musicians and the red carriage. Ah Din, being the younger brother, was to ride alone in the other carriage behind Chan Fah. When all was ready, the flageolets and drums began an old Chinese wedding march; and Chan Fah was being delivered to the house of Lee Bow Art.

Ah Din, wearing a new satin blouse, a new pair of embroidered slippers, and with his poll freshly shaven and his face shiny from a careful scrubbing, perched himself on the edge of the carriage seat and muttered a queer mixture of Cantonese and American schoolboy slang; for Ah Din's stomach was cold with anger. He did not want Chan Fah to marry Lee Bow Art, and he had tried to get Mock Don Yuen to do something about it; but Mock Don Yuen seemed always too busy reading his strange old books to discuss the matter.

So confident was the boy that the learned scholar could save Chan Fah if he would, that when the wedding procession was halted by a stalled cable car directly in front of where Mock Don Yuen lived, Ah Din slipped out of the carriage and ran upstairs to make a last appeal. But Mock Don Yuen was not at home.

A few of Lee Bow Art's friends had made him small presents, so they gathered at his home and waited eagerly for the delivery of the bride. Some of the older Chinese who had not forgotten the customs of their homeland, hid Lee Bow Art's wedding clothes and made him redeem them with trifling souvenirs. This made him very angry, for he had no patience with the old Chinese customs. He swore he would eat none of the red eggs which were cooked for him, although, as anyone knows, red eggs at wedding feasts always insure good fortune and many sons.

Lee Bow Art's young friends had mingled with the white foreign devils and, like him, they had become impudent and disrespectful. Thus, while the groom

was indifferently worshipping at the family altar, they stole the tangerines and *lichee* nuts and copper *cash* that had been strewn in the marriage bed, and which would have insured the bride and groom fruitfulness and wealth.

They were scuffling over the last coin when Lee So came puffing up the stairs. She knelt at the feet of Lee Bow Art, told him the bride was waiting, and begged him to go down and receive her.

Lee Bow Art took his lyre-shaped fan and ran down the stairs.

Lee So followed. If the groom should consent to receive the bride, it would be Lee So's duty to take Chan Fah on her back and carry her into the house lest the bride's feet touch the threshold and bring misfortune to the house of Lee.

When the groom and the bride's mother had gone down the stairs, the wedding guests placed a pan of burning charcoal at the head of the stairs so that Chan Fah would be purified by passing through the fumes. That done, the guests waited for the bride and groom to come.

Quite a crowd had gathered around the wedding procession, so Lee Bow Art suspected nothing when he noticed several Chinese standing close to the door of the red-topped carriage. Holding his head up haughtily, Lee Bow Art approached the cab. He raised his fan and rapped sharply on the door.

As though that were a signal, one of the Chinese by the cab stepped up and opened the door. With no little surprise, Lee Bow Art recognised him as Mock

Quong, a cousin of Mock Don Yuen, and one of the elders of the family of Mock.

Chan Fah was crouching in the farthest corner of the cab. Her eyes were so filled with the waters of sorrow, she could scarcely see the men at the door.

"Ko sing a?" inquired Mock Quong, although he had known her since childhood. "What is your lofty surname?"

"I—I am of the family of Chan, named Fah."

"Remain in the carriage," ordered Mock Quong sternly.

He closed the door, and turned to Lee Bow Art.

"Aih-yah! What a shameful thing! Don't you know that this woman is already the wife of Mock Don Yuen?"

Lee Bow Art's mouth fell open, and his eyes bulged like a toad's. "That is false!" he managed to say. "She was betrothed to me."

"She was betrothed to you after the Chinese custom. That would be binding in China, but it means nothing under the laws of this country, as you very well know, since you make such a boast of your American education. When Mock Don Yuen heard how you and Ah Yut planned to rob him of Chan Fah, who had been betrothed to him, he took her quickly to the mission. A foreign devil priest married them under the foreign devil laws. You are too late, and can do nothing. Go back into your house and tell your honourable father I will settle the matter with Ah Yut, and that the betrothal money will be returned."

Lee Bow Art stood still, his eyes filling with anger.

"I do not believe this, Mock Quong. To marry under the foreign devil laws, one must have a licence and——"

Someone stepped quickly from behind the red-topped carriage. It was Mock Don Yuen. The great scholar stood very tall and straight, and the black satin blouse and mandarin cap seemed to heighten the dignity and severity of his countenance.

"The foreign devil licence," said Mock Don Yuen sternly, "is here." He drew a folded paper from his sleeve and held it up where all could see.

Lee Bow Art could read English. He saw the words "Certificate of Marriage." He saw the imposing gold seal of the foreign devil laws. Without a word, he turned and went his way back into his father's house.

. . . . . .

It was nearing the hour of evening rice. The last rays of sunlight seemed to linger reverently on *The Chart of the Great Study,* gilding its strange character of age-old wisdom.

Chan Fah handed her husband a bowl of steaming Felicitous Spring tea.

"I am very happy, honourable husband," she said.

Mock Don Yuen bowed gracefully.

"Where the lily blooms, there the sunshine seems brightest," he told her.

The door was flung open, and Ah Din pranced into the room.

" 'Lo," he sang out, flinging his school cap at a peg. " 'Lo there, sis!" Then, about to accept the tea Chan Fah poured for him, he chanced to catch sight of

something Mock Don Yuen had tacked on the wall in the place of honour at the left of *The Chart of the Great Study*. It was the Certificate of Marriage that Mock Don Yuen had shown to Lee Bow Art.

Ah Din had never seen one before. He drew nearer, and read aloud:

> *This is to certify that David Jason, of Hamptonville, State of Massachusetts, and Annie Martin, of South Forks, State of Massachusetts, were by me united in Holy Matrimony according to the ordinance of God and the laws of the State of Massachusetts, at Hamptonville, Massachusetts, on the seventh day of October,* A.D. *1873. . . .*

"*Aih-yah!*" cried Ah Din, chokily. "Master—a mistake! Jason—why, that's the man who runs the pawnshop!"

Mock Don Yuen gave the boy a severe look.

"There has been no mistake. You told me that at this pawnshop I could buy anything the white foreign devils use. When I asked for a certificate of honourable marriage, the foreign devil laughed; but when he saw I was prepared to pay for it, he went upstairs and got this."

"But Mock Quong said——"

"Exactly what I told him to say. Do you think I have time for such nonsense as a marriage before a foreign devil priest? Chan Fah was properly betrothed to me; under the Chinese law she was mine. All that remained was to have her delivered to my house. In

order to do that peacefully, I arranged to deceive Lee Bow Art with this old foreign devil certificate. Then I sent word to Chan Fah that the lily would never be seen in the burrow of a toad."

The expression on Ah Din's face brought a smile to Mock Don Yuen's lips, a smile that lighted warm fires of tenderness in his dark eyes and illumined his face with spiritual beauty.

"Go now, little slave, and bring me my *Book of Ancient Odes*," he said gently. "It is three days gone since I studied poetry. *Ts, Ts!* Kung Fu Tse was right: 'Weddings are *nuisances!*'"

MOCK DON YUEN AND THE *TONGS*

I

SHORTLY before the hour of evening rice, on a day that had been singularly gloomy and depressing, Ah Din, holding his business college books high under his left arm and his umbrella low over his cap, padded soddenly down Dupont Street to the stairway that led up to the house of his father, Mock Ah Yut. For about the time it takes one to light the funeral tapers, the young man's slant, bronze eyes gazed meditatively at the ghostly figures moving like silent wraiths through the soggy mist; then, shaking out his umbrella, he began climbing the shabby, littered stairs.

He was at the landing where crimson and gold-lettered strips of paper warned away devils and evil spirits, when he was brought to a halt by the sound of a muffled report. It came, unmistakably, from the room at the head of the stairs, the room where Ah Din had expected to find his old father smoking his long bamboo pipe and muttering angrily to himself because his two wives, as was their custom, had tarried in the markets instead of hastening home to prepare the evening meal.

Startled, Ah Din shrank back against the wall, the fingers of his free hand outspread, fan-like, his mouth opening and shutting like that of a hungry carp. Wise

in the ways of his people, Ah Din knew that a pistol shot within the borders of the Chinese quarter was no trifling matter. Usually it signified a *tong* war, a war cruel and ruthless. The sound of that shot conjured visions of things that had been stamped indelibly on the youth's mind—hired gunmen waiting in darkened doorways; spurts of red flame in the night; silent figures huddled on the crimsoning pavement.

For a long moment, Ah Din waited on the stairs, his heart almost choking him, his stomach growing cold with fear. It was not fear for himself; it was a premonition of what he would find in the room at the head of the stairs. Presently, when he heard no more sounds, he went up the steps and threw open the door.

On the reed mat by the threshold, Ah Din halted and looked around. Many times he had mounted those stairs and entered this room; its picture was deeply etched on his memory. There was the oilcloth covered table with its jar of chop-sticks and dish of preserved ginger; the black kettles hung on the wall in neat array by the glowing charcoal fire; the American alarm clock ticked metallically on the mantel beneath the family scroll; the beaded portières over the doorway to the bedrooms stirred and clinked softly; and, by the window, was the deep rocking-chair where his father was wont to sit and smoke his long bamboo pipe. He would carry always the picture of his father sitting there, his wrinkled lips puckered over the mouthpiece, his bony hand reaching the glowing punk to the tobacco. He would never forget the soft *pf-fff* of lips as the acrid smoke was exhaled, nor the hissing of his

father's breath as he blew the ashes from the tiny silver bowl. . . .

But now his father was not in the chair. He lay on the floor. Hideous and ghastly beneath the yellow light, the old man lay on the bare floor, his eyes closed, a splotch of dark crimson over his left temple.

II

Mock Don Yuen, sage of San Francisco's Chinatown, on whom had been conferred the Chinese scholarship degree that signifies *Member of the Forest of Pencils*, sat very straight in his great, high-backed chair of teak-wood and meditated gravely on the ancient precepts of the *Ming Hsin Pao Chien*—a *Mirror of the Heart Gems* of the greatest men of China. While his left hand rested on the book, his right hand moved frequently to a bowl of preserved ginger that stood on the table by the tiny carved figure of Buddha; and the great scholar looked very severe and dignified save when, with his mouth full of ginger, he read some of the characters aloud. Mock Don Yuen was usually reading his ancient books, or meditating on their wisdom; and, whether reading or meditating, he had always a bowl of ginger at his elbow; for, as anyone knows, the stomach is the seat of wisdom, and ginger is an excellent tonic for the stomach.

Turning the pages from left to right, Mock Don Yuen came finally to a gem from Lu-tsu, and he began reading it aloud. Slowly, his forefinger moved down the column, pausing at each ideograph until he had uttered it:

"However—long—this—mortal life——"

Abruptly, the soft Cantonese hangings over the study doorway were flung aside. A young Chinese woman, dressed in silken trousers and embroidered jacket, ran into the room. She was dainty and pretty, like a Foo-chow doll; her eyes were dark and as bright as jewels; and her skin was the tint of precious old ivory. Her hair was done in an elaborate coiffure, fragrant with Oriental oils, and softly gleaming with ornaments of Chinese gold and jade.

"*Aih-yah!* Oh, how piteous!" cried the young woman in musical Cantonese. "Honourable husband, do not scold me because I speak without asking permission. Something terrible has happened!"

With the long, polished nail of his forefinger, Mock Don Yuen marked the point of interruption. He looked up, and shook his head gravely.

"*Ts, ts!* Little Flower," he said kindly; "you are always doing something discourteous; and then you soft-talk me out of giving you the scolding you deserve. But what is this trouble?"

"It is about Ah Din. You must go to see him at once. He is in prison."

"In prison? *Haie!* What has he done?"

"Nothing, honourable husband."

"Then, of course, you are mistaken. Unless he has done something wrong he cannot be arrested."

"I am not mistaken, sir," insisted Chan Fah politely. "When you have been in this land of foreign devils a little longer you will know that it is very easy for our

people to get into prison without doing any wrong. But they say, sir, that—that Ah Din has killed his father."

Slowly, Mock Don Yuen's deep bronze eyes narrowed and grew slant. For about the time it takes to put one's slippers on, he held silent.

"Tell me about this thing," he said at length.

The waters of sorrow had filled Chan Fah's eyes again, and it was some time before her heart would let her speak.

"I had waited a long time for Ah Din to come home from that honourable college of American business, sir; and something seemed to tell me that he was in trouble. You, of course, were deep in your books with no thought of Ah Din or the evening meal or even of me. So, at length, I went downstairs. It was very dark, and a heavy, white mist was falling that made people on the streets look like evil spirits moving silently through the air. I thought I would go into the *Great Prosperity and Benevolence Grocery Store* and speak with the college on the instrument for wire-talking; but on the street I met a man. He—he spoke to me. It was—Lee Bow Art."

Like curtains, the lids closed over Mock Don Yuen's eyes, then slowly opened again. Chan Fah looked down at the tiger-fur rug, and went on nervously.

"Lee Bow Art told me he had just heard the news and was very sorry.

"He said that Ah Din had gone to his father's house for something, and a foreign devil official, pausing in the doorway to escape the rain, caught Ah Din

running down the stairs. When he looked at Ah Din's face, and when Ah Din could not speak for terror, the official took him up the stairs again; and there—there they found my foster-father on the floor—dead."

"Dead!" echoed Mock Don Yuen. *"Aih-yah!* That is very unfortunate!" And he clicked his tongue and shook his head many times. "But, of course," he went on finally, "Ah Din has explained to the officials that he had nothing to do with the matter?"

"On the contrary, sir," cried Chan Fah, "he has confessed that he killed his father."

Mock Don Yuen bent forward slightly, his eyes fixed on the weeping woman, his thin, priest-like countenance motionless as the figure of Buddha. For about the time it takes one to sip a bowl of *Mui Kwei Lo* the room was silent, save for the broken sobs of Little Flower. Presently when she looked up and saw that Mock Don Yuen was again eating ginger and frowning over the characters in his book, she turned and glided silently from the room.

Slowly, the long, polished nail of the scholar's forefinger moved down the column from character to character. In the strangely musical intonations of the Chinese he read aloud:

> *"However—long—this—mortal life—its—events—are—all—uncertain."*

"Hi low!" exclaimed Mock Don Yuen, nodding his head many times; "that is true. Lu-tsu was quite right!"

III

The heavy mist had become a winter night's rain, cold, black, and dismal, when Mock Don Yuen and Charlie Sing, unofficial interpreter, entered the police station and made their way down the damp and draughty corridor to the office of the Captain of Detectives. They found the captain at his desk, and unoccupied. Telling Mock Don Yuen to wait, Sing went inside the railing and spoke in the captain's ear.

The captain looked up. "Wait a minute," he said. He arose, opened the door, and called to someone. From the other office came a big, quick-moving man with florid jowls and hard eyes. "Mike," said the captain in an undertone, "that bird by the door wants to talk with the Chink you grabbed to-night—the one who bumped off his old man. Shall we let him in? You know this business to-night might start a *tong* war."

The detective put out his lips. He shook his head emphatically.

"*Tong* war, nuthin'. Hasn't the kid confessed the whole thing? Cap, you take a fellow that's all Chink and he ain't so bad; but these smart aleck young birds that's learned American ways think they can get away with murder 'n' everything."

"All right," the captain agreed. "Sing says this bird doesn't savvy much English. Give him a frisk, then take him down to the cells."

The detective went over Mock Don Yuen with a quick, rough hand. Not finding any drugs or weapons,

he opened the door that led by a gloomy corridor down to the cells.

They stopped before a cell door, a thing of black steel bars with a small rectangular opening at about the height of a man's head. At once, a pair of slender brown hands seized the bars, and slant, dark eyes showed at the hole in the door. Ah Din, his voice broken and all but unintelligible, cried out in Cantonese:

"Oh, Sir Scholar, I knew you would come! I knew you would come!"

Mock Don Yuen's resonant voice broke and quavered: "*Aih-yah!* Oh, how piteous, little one!"

"I knew you would come!" went on Ah Din. "They told me you said you would not come until morning, but I knew they were lying."

"They did not tell me. I heard it from Chan Fah, who heard it on the street. Why have you done this terrible thing?"

"Sir, I have done nothing——"

"But they say——"

"They lie!" cried Ah Din brokenly. "I—I heard the shot. I ran upstairs and found my father dying. I was on my way down-stairs to get a doctor when that man"—he indicated the detective—"arrested me."

"Then why did you confess?"

"So that man would stop striking me."

Mock Don Yuen pressed closer to the bars. He saw now that the boy's lips were cut and bleeding in many places, and were so swollen that he could talk only with the greatest difficulty.

"There were four of them," Ah Din went on. "They asked me many questions; and when I would answer truthfully, that man would strike me quickly in the mouth with the palm of his hand; and he would say 'You lie! You killed him!' He kept striking me until my head was aching and reeling so I could no longer think. When he knocked me down the third time, I was afraid to get up. Then they stood over me and said over and over: 'You killed him, didn't you? You killed him, didn't you? You killed him, didn't you?' I was so afraid they would kill me that finally I told them what they wanted me to say. Then they let me alone."

Mock Don Yuen looked around at the detective. The officer's big hands were fumbling with a cigarette, his eyes, cold and hard, were on the visitor.

"That is their custom, venerable Mock Don Yuen," explained Sing apologetically. "They do that to their own people as well as to ours."

"What a cruel and peculiar custom!" said Mock Don Yuen musingly. "Now in Canton they would merely have strung him up by toe and thumb, and perhaps the jailers would have flogged him with bamboo until he confessed. Truly, this is a strange land!" And he clicked his tongue and shook his head many times.

"Listen, please, Sir Scholar," begged Ah Din. "This is a great trouble for me. There was an old coat of mine hanging on the wall by the door. In the pocket of that coat the official found a revolver with one empty shell. It was not my father's revolver. The officer accused me of shooting my father and hiding

the gun in my coat. I told him it was not my gun; and I explained that it was the practice of Chinese *tong* gun-men to get rid of the weapon in some way as soon as they had accomplished their purpose. But he wouldn't believe me. He said that anybody coming in from the street would have left the print of wet shoes; and he showed me that my own tracks and his were the only ones on the floor. Then the detective blew his whistle and more officers came. They asked me many questions, but I told them the truth. My mother and Jue Yoke came home from the market just before the officers took me away. My mother wanted to send for you at once but the officers would not permit it."

Mock Don Yuen shook his head slowly. "It would have been very easy for someone to go over the roofs to the window of your father's bedroom and leave his slippers outside. Have you any idea who did this thing?"

Ah Din started to reply; but as though he had suddenly become aware of Sing's presence, he checked himself. Then he spoke quietly.

"Sir Scholar, I cannot say more now. Please go quickly to Mock Quong, the druggist. He knows the gossip from four quarters. He will tell you everything."

"Well," agreed Mock Don Yuen, after a moment's meditation, "I shall go first to your father's house; then I will see Mock Quong. Meanwhile, little one, having met with a bitter cup to drink, drink your bitter cup; but do not fear. *The Eye of Heaven*

sees all human actions; therefore, the superior man is never offended at being misunderstood by mortals. *Tsau kom lok.*"

"Walk slowly, Sir Scholar," said Ah Din.

IV

Mock Don Yuen returned to Chinatown and went to the house of his cousin Mock Ah Yut. Even from the street he could hear the cries of the two women; he knew thereat that the officials had taken the body away. He found Lee So, the principal wife, at the window shaking one of Ah Yut's garments in the wind, and imploring the spirit of her dead husband to return; while Jue Yoke, the secondary wife, burned devil papers by the threshold and muttered prayers to the gods of the principal doors of the house.

Now it was in Mock Don Yuen's heart to take the two sorrowing women to his own home that Chan Fah might care for them; but as any one knows, great misfortune might befall Chan Fah if her mother should visit her before the young bride had borne a child, so the scholar gave them money and went his way.

A moment later, Mock Don Yuen entered the drug store of Mock Quong, one of the principal elders of the family of Mock.

Laying aside the abacus with which he had been calculating the profits for the day, Mock Quong led the visitor to a small gas-lighted room in the rear. He tendered his guest a stool of Chinese ebony inlaid with strips of the white wood of Ningpo, then seated himself on the opposite side of the large, round table.

"Estimable Mock Quong, I am covered with shame," began Mock Don Yuen, speaking the Sz Yip dialect of the Cantonese. "I walk with heavy heart and sorrowful countenance; for I must tell you of the thing that has befallen one of the family of Mock."

Mock Quong bowed his head respectfully; and for about the time it takes one to cool a bowl of chop suey, there was silence. Then Mock Quong said:

"Although I am many generations removed from any of the family of Mock in this province, it grieves me when sorrow comes to one of our venerable family name."

"Your virtue overwhelms me," said Mock Don Yuen, bowing his head; "for I have been very unfilial. One should think always of the family name and honour it even more than—learning."

"But, Sir Scholar, learning engenders filial piety; and you are a very learned man. You know poetry, without which one does not know words; you know history, without which one does not know people; and, what is even more important, you know the upkeep of courtesy."

"Hi low," agreed Mock Don Yuen; "that is true. Yet there are many things I do not understand." And the great scholar shook his head and clicked his tongue many times.

For about the time, then, that it takes one to eat a bowl of rice, neither made speech. Then Mock Quong leaned forward and said quietly:

"It was Lee Bow Art who killed Ah Yut."

"Haie!" exclaimed Mock Don Yuen, widening his long, dark eyes, "I should have known that."

Mock Quong nodded. "I am not surprised. There have been rumours of this thing for some time. It is because of Chan Fah, who is now Mrs. Mock."

"How can that be?" demanded Mock Don Yuen angrily. "Little Flower has done nothing improper."

"Indeed she has not. You do not understand because you are but lately from the Middle Kingdom and have not learned our ways. You are too busy with your books for such trifling things. But, Sir Scholar, a *tong* war is no trifling thing."

Mock Quong arose and from a shelf where stood many ancient looking jars and boxes he took a bowl of Shensi almonds. He placed them on the table, and sat down.

"You do not know these matters, venerable Mock Don Yuen," he went on, munching an almond, "because you come from the great *City of Rams* on the coast where many families live in faternal peace under the Chinese magistrates. It is quite different here. The white foreign devils have much law but little justice. As you very well know, it is quite easy to learn the law in our homeland because it has not been changed for a thousand years; but here there is so much law that no one knows it and it changes with the wind.

"Yet it never changes for our benefit," went on Mock Quong. "If we make complaint to the foreign devil officials about any matter, we must first hire an interpreter because the foreign devil lawyers do not

know our beautiful Cantonese language and are too indolent to learn it although, as anyone knows, they could do so very easily. Then we have to buy a lawyer; and if he loses our case we have to pay him anyway, which, of course, is very unjust.

"The lawyer and the interpreter then take our case before the lesser magistrate who says we are right, but that we must go before a higher magistrate to prove that we are right. When it comes before the higher magistrate each lawyer reads a different book and argues that the law is this and the law is that; then the magistrate reads his book and says everybody is wrong including the lesser magistrate who sent us to him.

"If we have any money left, the case is taken before a still greater magistrate; but instead of letting us go to one who knows about the case, they make us take it to one who knows nothing about it, and who hires twelve assistants who must swear that they also know nothing about it. After a long trial the magistrate and his assistants tell us that we have been right all the time but it was not properly proven and must be done all over again. *Aih!*" shouted Mock Quong, spitting in disgust, "did you ever see such stupidity?"

Mock Don Yuen shook his head and clicked his tongue many times; but he did not know what to say.

"And so," went on Mock Quong at length, "we who have been long in the land have organised into *tongs* to settle our own disputes according to our own laws as is done in the villages in China. All bearing the surname of Lee have formed the Lee Family

Tong, even though most of the Lees here are separated by many generations. All of the Wongs have united in the Wong Family Society. The other families have done likewise. Since the Lees and the Wongs are many and powerful, the Mocks, the Doos, and the Lims, which are few, have banded together in the Three Family *Tong*. Each *tong* has its elders to whom all disputes are referred; and no one makes complaints of any kind to the foreign devil officials.

"Thus if a Lee man slay another Lee man, it is a matter for the Lee Family *Tong* to settle. No one else is concerned; and the matter is settled with peace and honour to all. But if a Lee man slay a member of the Three Family *Tong,* our elders lay complaint before the elders of the Lees. It happens sometimes that the elders cannot agree as to what is right, and neither *tong* will submit. Then there is a *tong* war. That, venerable Mock Don Yuen, is what I fear will happen in this case.

"When Chan Fah had been betrothed to you, it was wrong for Ah Yut to betroth her then to Lee Bow Art. You did right to take her away from Lee Bow Art on the wedding day; but the affair made the Lees lose much face. They are a proud and powerful *tong*. Our *tong* felt that we had done all that was necessary when we had made due explanations and had returned the betrothal money to Lee Bow Art's father; but the Lees felt that only revenge would satisfy their honour. So Lee Bow Art has killed Ah Yut.

"Our elders will meet to-morrow and demand that

the Lee *Tong* make a money settlement on the widows of Ah Yut; but the Lees will laugh at us for they think that Lee Bow Art did right. Then we shall have to draw lots to see which of us must kill Lee Bow Art or some other Lee of the same station. Then the Lees, to save their face again, will kill another Mock man, perhaps you, Sir Scholar, because you are nearest of kin to Ah Yut. And they will send wire talk to every city where our people live saying that the Lee Family *Tong* and the Three Family *Tong* are at war. *Aih-yah!* There will be much bloodshed. Since each *tong* thinks it is right, and neither will humble itself, they will kill man for man until peace-talkers from other *tongs* effect a compromise."

Mock Don Yuen walked his way slowly and with troubled mind. The great scholar's life had been one of study and peaceful meditation; he was dismayed by the picture drawn by Mock Quong—not so much by the thought of bloodshed as by the utter uselessness of it all.

"Two things only are needful," he told Chan Fah as they lingered over a late dish of *chow heung-sen gai min*. "Ah Din must be saved from prison; and the murder of his father must be avenged. A *tong* war—a slaying of man for man—will not help Ah Din; it will only put more of our people in prison. I must save Ah Din, I must avenge his father's murder, and I must prevent this *tong* war. *Haie!* How I am to do that, I do not know; but, as the wise Kung Fu Tse said: 'Where there's a will, then 'tis lightly done'."

V

Old Mock Gow, the tea and bean-sprout merchant, had just taken down his shutters, and was rattling his abacus outside the doorway so that the day would be a prosperous one, when Mock Don Yuen paused and spoke to him:

"Good morning, honest and industrious Mock Gow. May your customers come like the wind-blown rain!"

"*Tso shan,* Sir Scholar!" chuckled the merchant, bowing many times. "May your day be as full of content as your stomach is of wisdom. But why should a scholar be abroad so early?"

"Because a scholar must sow his seeds early if they are to ripen before the winter storms."

Old Mock Gow did not understand that; so he flicked the counters of his abacus into position, and said nothing. After a while Mock Don Yuen inquired politely as to the health of Mock Gow's eldest son, and then the health of the other members of the family. Presently they discussed the growing and selling of bean-sprouts; and finally Mock Don Yuen said:

"From several quarters I have heard gossip of a war between our *tong* and the Lees. That will be bad for business."

"*Hi low!*" exclaimed Mock Gow; "that is true! It will keep rich foreign devils far away from my store; it will even keep many of our own people in hiding. *Aih!* I remember one time when I was in hiding myself for four months."

Mock Don Yuen nodded his head and clicked his

tongue. "This slaying of man for man is wicked and foolish," he declared sternly. "Those who vote for it show their lack of learning. Breadth of reading and the ties of courtesy will keep one from doing such a stupid thing. Besides"—and he put out his slender hands, fingers outspread, fan-like, in that stabbing gesture that is peculiarly Chinese—"besides, why use an ox-knife to kill a fowl?" Then, before the merchant could speak, Mock Don Yuen tucked his hands in his long sleeves, and walked his way.

A moment later he entered the silk and curio store of one Bin Gong, of the family of Doo; and after talking about this and that, Mock Don Yuen said: "I have heard gossip of a war between the Lees and the Three Family *Tong*. That will be bad business."

"That is true!" exclaimed Doo Bin Gong. "It will keep rich foreign devils far away from my silk and curio store; it will even keep many of our own people in hiding. *Aih!* One time I was in hiding myself for four months."

"This slaying of man for man is as foolish as it is wicked," said Mock Don Yuen sternly. "Those who favour it show their lack of learning. Breadth of reading and the ties of courtesy will keep one's steps from the path of error. Besides"—and he stabbed out with slender hands outspread, fan-like—"besides, why use an ox-knife to kill a fowl?" Then, before Doo Bin Gong could speak, the great scholar tucked his hands in the sleeves of his blouse, and walked his way.

Shortly before the hour of mid-day rice, Mock Don Yuen called on Mock Quong.

"I am happy to see you," said the elder. "Our *tong* just had its meeting to discuss the demands we must make on the Lees for slaying Mock Ah Yut. It was agreed that we could not honourably overlook what Lee Bow Art has done. But every one of the eleven representatives advised that we delay action; and when we demanded that they give reasons for delay, each of them replied: 'This morning I talked with the great scholar, Mock Don Yuen. When we spoke of a war between our *tong* and the Lees, he asked me why we should use an ox-knife to kill a fowl. Now, I would like to know what he meant by that?' So, learned scholar, I have been delegated to ask you to explain your strange words."

"How long a delay was granted?"

"Only until you have told the meaning of your words."

"Then," said Mock Don Yuen sternly, "let nothing be done for three days. At the end of that time I will explain—if necessary." And before the elder could object, Mock Don Yuen tucked his hands in his sleeves and walked his way.

Chan Fah had the mid-day meal waiting when Mock Don Yuen reached his home. They finished their *cho go gong* soup, then she set out a platter of fried noodles with chicken and mushrooms. Mock Don Yuen smacked his lips with much satisfaction; but Little Flower ate silently, with many shy glances at her husband.

"Please, honourable husband," she said finally, "may I speak?"

Mock Don Yuen, his mouth filled with hot noodles, nodded gravely.

"It is about Lee Bow Art," Chan Fah began timidly. "I—I cannot go on the street without him speaking to me. It shames me very much, for, of course, it is highly improper for me to speak with other men. But to-day, sir, he said a very strange thing to me. He said that if I had been wedded to him, my foster-father would not have been killed, and that Ah Din would not be in prison."

"That is quite true, Little Flower; but it is no fault of yours."

Then, suddenly, Mock Don Yuen's long, dark eyes grew narrow. *"Haie!"* he shouted angrily. "Whither the wind blows, hither the grass bends." And he nodded his head many times.

Chan Fah, not knowing the meaning of her husband's strange speech, arose quietly and cleared away the dishes. Then she fetched a jar of preserved dragon-eye fruit, some rice cakes, and brewed a fresh bowl of Imperial tea. Breathing a prayer to the beneficent gods of the kitchen, she spilled a little of the tea on the floor, then served her husband.

When Mock Don Yuen had smacked his lips over the last morsel of rice cake, and had consumed many bowls of tea, he sat for a time in silent meditation. Presently he looked up at Chan Fah; and although his eyes were kind, his voice was very severe.

"Remove your bracelet!"

Chan Fah looked up, surprised. Her bracelet was a very beautiful one of the finest Khoten jade, and

she was very proud of it. But, being a dutiful wife, she obeyed without speaking.

Mock Don Yuen bent forward suddenly, and with the heavy end of a chop stick, struck the girl a sharp blow on the bare arm. Paying no heed to her cry of pain and astonishment, he said sternly: "Go now into the street; and when you meet Lee Bow Art, smile at him and talk with him. When he asks you about that red welt, tell him that your honourable husband struck you. Then walk your way quickly."

"But, sir——"

"Will you obey me?"

"Yes—yes, sir; but I do not understand."

"It is not necessary that a woman understand. It is her duty to obey and leave understanding to her husband. Now walk your way, Little Flower," he went on more kindly. "There is much to do, and the hours do not tarry for us."

Chan Fah was not long returning. She had seen Lee Bow Art in front of the *Mother of Heaven Temple* and had talked with him, saying what her honourable husband had told her to say.

Mock Don Yuen nodded approvingly. "Attend now to your work," he said; "and when that is finished, put on your jacket of Hang-chiu silk and go to Louie's for shrimps for the evening meal. When you meet Lee Bow Art, walk with a sorrowful countenance; and when he tries to make speech with you, say that you must never speak with him again on the street for fear of your honourable husband."

This Chan Fah did gladly, for she was anxious to be rid of the whole matter.

But the next morning, after early rice, Mock Don Yuen said: "Go again into the street and walk where you will meet Lee Bow Art. When he tries to talk with you, smile at him and say 'Some other time.' He will ask then if your husband is always watching. You will reply that to-day after the three o'clock lottery drawing your honourable husband will be away, but that he has forbidden you to go on the street during his absence. Then Lee Bow Art will ask to visit you; and you must say: 'No; someone might see you and tell my honourable husband.' Then walk your way at once."

Chan Fah hesitated. She opened her lips several times as though to speak; but finally she went to her room. She did not understand at all; but she had great faith in her husband's wisdom. So she did faithfully all that Mock Don Yuen had directed, then hastened back to tell him of the matter.

Mock Don Yuen nodded slowly. "I am well pleased. Now, when Lee Bow Art comes you must admit him. Bring him to my study, and serve tea. The rest will be made clear to you at the proper time."

Chan Fah stared. "Oh, sir," she cried, "will he come? Must I do this dishonourable thing?"

"Certainly he will come. You as much as told him he could come if he did not let anyone see him. But you will not be committing any impropriety, Little Flower. Outwardly one may conform, yet inwardly keep to one's own standards."

"But, sir——"

"Do not confuse me with chatter! Attend closely to what I have said. Now walk your way. I must meditate."

So Chan Fah went about her work, anxious to please her august husband, but oppressed with many misgivings. She was so nervous that she could neither smile nor speak when, at the hour of three, she admitted Lee Bow Art and led him to Mock Don Yuen's study.

The young Chinese glanced quickly around at the ancient books with their gilt cords and discs of jade. "Where is your husband?" he asked, a hint of respect in his voice.

"I—I do not know," replied Chan Fah truthfully. "He told me not to go until he returned."

"Will he return soon?"

"I do not know. Very often he goes to talk with Mock Quong and does not return until the hour of evening rice. If you will be so gracious as to sit down I will make some tea."

Lee Bow Art sat down. Hungrily, his eyes followed Chan Fah until the Cantonese hangings over the study doorway had closed behind her. Then he arose and went quickly to the window. He saw that it opened on a fire-escape, and was not locked. Satisfied, Lee Bow Art glided across the room to where stood a stand-screen of silk, embroidered with figures of plum blossoms and epidendrons. He looked behind the screen, and jumped back startled. Then, with a cynical smile, he looked again. Behind the screen, resting on two

camphor-wood chests, was a coffin. It was a massive affair, lacquered and highly polished. Hearing light steps in the hallway, Lee Bow Art went quickly to the table and sat down again.

Chan Fah put down her tray and set out the cups. Her hands were trembling, and tears glistened like jewels in her dark eyes.

"You are very unhappy," said Lee Bow Art. "I am sorry, but it could not be otherwise with Mock Don Yuen. He cares for nothing but his books and old customs. *Haie!* I suppose he has a coffin around some place."

"And why not?" challenged Little Flower quickly. "Isn't it one's duty to have a coffin ready against the time of ascending the dragon?"

Lee Bow Art had nothing to say. He picked up his bowl of tea, smelled it, and as cautiously tasted it. Then, reassured, he finished off the tiny serving, and put down the empty cup.

Suddenly, from behind the screen, Mock Don Yuen stepped forward and faced them. He held a revolver in his hand.

"Stand up, Lee Bow Art!" he ordered. "Go to your room, Little Flower!"

Lee Bow Art made a movement toward the pocket of his blouse; but seeing Mock Don Yuen aiming steadily at him, he thought better of it, and stood up. Chan Fah, her hands pressed to her pounding heart, her eyes wide with fear, ran from the room.

Mock Don Yuen went to Lee Bow Art and took away his revolver. Then he went to the stool opposite

Lee Bow Art and sat down. *"Ts'ing tso!"* he commanded. He put Lee Bow Art's revolver in the table drawer. His own revolver he held ready in his lap.

Lee Bow Art, badly frightened, but wary, sat down. He knew that it was a very heinous thing he had done. He knew that if Mock Don Yuen should slay him, the Lee Family *Tong* would say that Mock Don Yuen had done right; and they would hide their faces in shame because one of their family had visited a married woman.

"A fierce outside, but a weak core," said Mock Don Yuen, musingly; "like a thief that crawls through a hole in the wall. I have known for some time of your distasteful attentions to Mrs. Mock. I have decided on your punishment."

Lee Bow Art stared with round eyes, but he did not speak.

"From different quarters I have heard that you desire much to go to China; you have said that you wished you had taken Chan Fah and fled to China with her. Very well, let it be so. You shall go to China. My faithless wife shall go with you.

"There is a condition, however," went on Mock Don Yuen, while Lee Bow Art stared and gulped. "When you are in China you will be in no danger of being punished by the white foreign devils for killing Ah Yut. Is that not so?"

The young man started sharply. He studied Mock Don Yuen's face, and hesitated. "Yes, that is true," he admitted finally.

"Then, as a condition, it will be necessary for you

to write a paper telling about the whole matter so that the foreign devil officials will release Ah Din. Also you will have to make a money settlement on the widows of Ah Yut in order that the honour of our *tong* may be satisfied without going to war with the Lees."

Lee Bow Art seemed scarcely to breathe, and his eyes were like glass. He stared now at the stern visage of the man across the table, now at the floor, the while his long, yellow fingers curled and twisted with restless, sinuous motion.

"You mean," he stammered finally, "you mean that if I sign a paper that will free Ah Din, and if I make a money settlement on the widows of Ah Yut, thus preventing a war between the Lees and the Three Family *Tong*, you will permit me to go to China with Mrs. Mock?"

Mock Don Yuen nodded. "You may go on the first boat. My faithless wife shall go on the same boat."

"Give me paper," said Lee Bow Art quickly.

From a drawer in the table, Mock Don Yuen took paper, a Chinese pen of fine camelhair, and a vial of *Dragon Fragrance* ink. He set them before Lee Bow Art. "Write first to the foreign devil police," he said. "Tell them that you killed Ah Yut, and why. Tell them the whole matter so they will know your words are true words."

Lee Bow Art thought for a moment, then bent his head and wrote rapidly. He signed his name, and gave the paper to Mock Don Yuen, who merely glanced at it, then said:

"Now write to your honourable father, saying that the foreign devil police have learned that you killed Ah Yut and that you have fled to China. Tell him you cannot escape both the police and the Mocks. Tell him therefore to make a money settlement on Ah Yut's widows and be done with the matter."

"That is good advice," agreed Lee Bow Art, and began writing. Meanwhile, Mock Don Yuen read the first letter, and found it satisfactory. The foreign devil police could not read it, of course; but they had many interpreters whom they could trust.

"Now," went on Mock Don Yuen, when the second letter had been finished, "write to Mock Quong, elder of the Mock family, telling him of the things in these two letters so that he may know provision has been made for the widows of Ah Yut, and the honour of our *tong* satisfied."

Lee Bow Art, thinking only of the trip he was to take with Chan Fah, wrote as directed. This, also, proved satisfactory. Mock Don Yuen began to gather up the three letters.

Of a sudden, Lee Bow Art snatched them up. "*Haie!* I have done my part. How do I know you will now do yours? Do you intend to have the foreign devil police arrest me before I can leave for China? I will mail these letters when Chan Fah and I reach Canton."

"That is quite right," agreed Mock Don Yuen, nodding his head many times. "I had not thought of the matter." He raised his voice: "Little Flower!"

The girl came timidly into the room and stood by her husband.

"It is finished," said Mock Don Yuen; "serve the parting cup. Fetch my jar of precious *Dew of Roses* wine."

Chan Fah brought a small stone jar bearing a stained and yellowed label. She filled two tiny Swatow bowls, then left the room.

Mock Don Yuen raised his bowl. "May your journey, and that of my faithless wife, be one of abiding peace," he said, and drained his wine.

Lee Bow Art, seeing Mock Don Yuen drink his, swallowed the pungent wine at a gulp.

Mock Don Yuen put down his bowl. Then, quickly, he took from beneath his blouse, a small vial, put the vial to his lips, and drained it.

Lee Bow Art jumped up.

"*Aih-yah!* What does this mean? You—devil! Poison——"

"You are quite right," replied Mock Don Yuen, as he watched Lee Bow Art cling to the table and sway stupidly. "And I have been so discourteous as to use all the antidote myself. You should have known that when you hit a tiger and do not kill him you become his prey. *Tsau kom lok!*"

. . . . . .

On a spring day, not long afterward, Mock Don Yuen stood by the after port-rail of the *China Queen* and meditated gravely as the grey hills of San Francisco slowly faded into the horizon. In his embroidered smock of black satin and his red-buttoned cap, the great scholar was a picturesque figure, severe, august,

"I am so happy, honourable husband," Chan Fah smiled up at him. "Please do not scold me if I ask a question. What became of Lee Bow Art? Why did you tell him he would go to China on the boat with me? When I heard that I ran to my room and wept and listened no more."

A shadow of a smile passed over the man's dark lips. "Little Flower," he said kindly, "it is written in *The Lun Yu* that the superior man does not speak of what is ended. Let it be so." And he nodded his head many times.

Behind Mock Don Yuen's back, Ah Din gave his sister a warning nudge.

"Didn't you see that big coffin Mock Don Yuen brought along?" he whispered in English. "*That's* where Lee Bow Art is!"

A LIFE—A BOWL OF RICE

Bow Sam stood in the doorway by his sugar-cane stand and watched with narrowed eyes an old man who shuffled uncertainly down the alley toward him.

"*Hoo la ma!*" cried Bow Sam, in surprised Cantonese as the old man drew near. "Hello, there! I scarcely knew you, venerable Fa'ng!"

Fa'ng, the hatchetman, straightened his bent shoulders and looked up. There was a gleam in his deep bronze eyes that was hardly in keeping with his withered frame.

"*Hoo la ma,* Bow Sam," he said, his voice strangely deep and vibrant.

"You have grown very thin," remarked Bow Sam with friendly interest.

"*Hi low;* that is true. But why carry around flesh that is not food?"

The sugar-cane vendor eyed the other shrewdly. What was the gossip he had heard concerning Fa'ng, the famous old hatchetman? Was it not that the old man was always hungry? Yes, that was it! Fa'ng, whose long knife and swift arm had been the most feared thing in all Chinatown, was starving—too proud to beg, too honest to steal.

"You have eaten well, venerable Fa'ng?" The inquiry was in a casual tone, respectful.

"*Aih,* I have eaten well," replied the old hatchetman, averting his face.

"How unfortunate for me! I have not yet eaten my rice; for when one must dine alone, one goes slowly to table. Is it not written that a bowl of rice shared is doubly enjoyed? Would you not at least have a cup of tea while I eat my mean fare?"

"I shall be honoured to sip tea with you, estimable Bow Sam," replied the hatchetman with poorly disguised eagerness.

"Then condescend to enter my poor house! Ah, one does not often have the pleasure of your company in these days!"

Bow Sam preceded his guest to the wretched hovel that was the sugar-cane vendor's only home. There he quickly removed all trace of the bowl of rice he had eaten but a moment before.

"Will you take this poor stool, venerable Fa'ng?" said Bow, setting out the only stool he possessed, and placing it so that the hatchetman's back would be to the stove.

Wearily, Fa'ng sat down. Bow put out two small cups, each worn and badly chipped, and filled them with hot tea. Then, while the hatchetman sipped his tea, Bow uncovered the rice kettle. There was but one bowl of rice left. Bow Sam had intended to keep it for his evening meal; for until he sold some sugar-cane, he had no way of obtaining more food.

Behind Fa'ng's back, Bow took two rice bowls and set them on the stove. One bowl he heaped full for the hatchetman. In the other he put an upturned tea

bowl and sprinkled over it his last few grains of rice.

"Let us give thanks to the gods of the kitchen that we have food and teeth and appetite," chuckled Bow Sam, seating himself on a sugar-cane box opposite Fa'ng.

"Well spoken," returned the old hatchetman quickly, filling his mouth with the nourishing rice. *"Aih!* there is much in life to make one content."

With his chop-sticks Bow Sam deftly took up a few grains of rice, taking care lest he uncover the upturned tea bowl.

"I am very grateful," said Bow, "that I have a few teeth left, that I quite often have enough rice, and that I sometimes have meat as often as once a month; but to hear you—a proud old hatchetman—express such sentiments on an empty stomach fills me with admiration."

"It is a virtue to be content with one's lot," remarked Fa'ng quietly.

"Hi low! That is true! But the younger generation are always fretting because they think they have not enough; while, as anyone knows, they have much more than we who first came to this land of the white foreign devil."

"They are young," spoke Fa'ng, nodding his head slowly. "For us the days have fled, the years have not tarried. And we have learned that if one has but a bowl of rice for food and a bent arm for pillow, one can be content."

"Haie! How can you speak so softly of the younger generation when it is they who have robbed you of

your livelihood? I know the gossip. You, the most famous killer in Chinatown, find yourself cast out like a worn-out broom by these young upstarts who have no respect for their elders. Is it not true?"

With his left hand the old hatchetman made an eloquent gesture, peculiarly Chinese, much as one quickly throws open a fan.

"Of what value are words, my friend? They cannot change that which is changeless. A word cannot temper the wind, nor a phrase procure food for a hungry stomach."

"Nevertheless, I do not like such things," persisted Bow Sam. "I love the old ways. You were an honourable and fearless killer. When you were hired to slay one's enemy you went boldly to your victim and told him your business. Then, swiftly, even before the doomed one could open his lips, you struck—cleaned your blade and walked your way.

"The modern killers!" Bow Sam spewed the words out as one does sour rice. "They are too cowardly to use the knife. They hide on roofs, fire on their victims, then throw away their guns and flee like thieves. *Aih,* what have we come to in these days!

"It was but yesterday after mid-day rice that I had speech with Gar Ling, a gunman of the Sin Wah *tong*. He stopped to buy sugar-cane, and I told him that had I the money I would hire him. There is one of the younger generation, the pock-marked son of Quong, the dealer in jade, who has greatly wronged me and my honourable family name, and my distinguished ancestors. As you very well know, one cannot soil

one's own hands with the blood of vengeance. Moreover, I have no weapon, not even a dull cleaver. Neither can I afford to hire a fighting man.

"I was telling all this to Gar Ling," went on Bow, straining the last drop of tea into Fa'ng's bowl, "and he told me he would settle my quarrel, but it would cost one thousand dollars. When I told him I had not even a thousand copper *cash,* he became angry and abusive. As he walked his way, quickly, like a foreign devil, he spat in my direction and called me an unspeakable name."

"*Ts, ts!* You should have wrung his neck. Repeat to me his unspeakable words."

"He said," cried Bow Sam, his face twisted in fury, "that I am *the son of a turtle!*"

"*Aih-yah!* How insulting! As anyone knows, in all our language there is no epithet more vile!"

"That is true. But what is even worse, I did not remember until after he had gone, that he had not paid me for the piece of sugar-cane. Such is the way of the younger generation; and we, who have been long in the land can do nothing."

"Yet it is by such things that one learns the lesson of enduring tranquillity," remarked Fa'ng, smacking his lips and moving back from the table.

For about the time, then, that it takes one to make nine bows before the household gods, neither man made speech. Then Fa'ng arose.

"An excellent bowl of rice, my good friend."

"*Aih,* it shames me to have to give you such mean fare."

"And the tea was most fragrant."

"*Ts,* it was only the cheapest *Black Dragon.*"

The two old men went to the door.

"*Ho hang la,*" said the hatchetman.

"*Ho hang la,*" echoed the sugar-cane vendor. "I hope you have a safe walk."

. . . . . .

Fa-ng, the hatchetman, made his way down the alley to the rear entrance of a pawnshop. There he spoke a few words with the proprietor.

"I know you are honest, old man," said the pawnbroker. "But instead of bringing it back, I hope, for your own sake, you will be able to pay what you owe me."

Then from a safe he took a knife with long, slender blade and a handle of ebony in which had been carved an unbelievable number of notches. Fa'ng took the knife, handling it as one does an object of precious memories, concealed it beneath his tattered blouse, and went his way.

Near the entrance of a gambling house in Canton Alley the old hatchetman met the pock-marked son of Quong, the dealer in jade.

"For the wrong you have done Bow Sam, his family name, and his distinguished ancestors," said Fa'ng quietly; and before the other could open his lips the long blade was through his heart.

In front of a cigar store in Shanghai Place, Fa'ng found Gar Ling, the gunman. "I have business of moment with you, Gar Ling," said the hatchetman. "Come."

Gar Ling hesitated. He stood in great fear of the old killer, yet he dared not show that fear before his young friends. So with his left hand he gave a peculiar signal. A boy standing near with a basket of *lichee* on his arm turned quickly and followed the two men down the alley. Drawing near his employer, the boy held up the basket as though soliciting the gunman to buy. Gar's hand darted swiftly into the basket, beneath the *lichee*, and came out with a heavy automatic pistol which he quickly concealed beneath his blouse.

The old hatchetman knew all the tricks of the young gunmen, but he pretended he had not seen. As they turned a dark corner, he paused.

"For the insulting words you spoke to Bow Sam," he said calmly, and the long blade glided between the gunman's ribs.

As Fa'ng drew the steel away, Gar Ling staggered, fired once, then collapsed.

. . . . . .

Bow Sam stood in the doorway by his sugar-cane stand and watched with narrowed eyes an old man who shuffled uncertainly down the alley toward him.

"Hoo la ma!" he cried, as the old man drew near. "I did not expect to see you again so soon."

The old hatchetman did not raise his head nor reply. Staggering, he crossed the threshold and fell on his face on the littered floor.

With a throaty cry Bow Sam slammed the door shut. He bent over Fa'ng.

"This knife," said the hatchetman; "take it—to

Wong the pawnbroker. Tell him—all. Worth—more—than I owe."

"But what's——"

"For the wrong that the pock-marked one did you, for the insult Gar Ling spoke to you, I slew them," said Fa'ng, with sudden strength. "My debt is paid. *Tsau kom lok.*"

"*Haie!* You did that! Why did you do that? I could never pay you! And look! *Aih-yah,* oh, how piteous! You are dying!"

With awkward fingers, the vendor of sugar-cane tried to staunch the flow of blood where Gar Ling's bullet had struck with deadly effect.

"Pay me?" breathed Fa'ng the hatchetman. "Did you—not—feed me? Can one—put a value—on food—when the stomach—is empty? *Aih,* what matters it? A life,"—his eyelids fluttered and closed—"a life—a bowl of rice. . . ."

THE STRATEGY OF AH LO

I

THERE was no doubt about it. The money was gone.

Kwan Kim closed the lid of his father's camphor-wood chest, and sat down on it. From beneath his black satin blouse he got a cheap Chinese cigarette and a small block of matches. There was dismay, pity, and anger in the deep bronze eyes as he looked at his father.

His father, Kwan Gar, sat in his chair by the window, his long-stemmed pipe across his bony knees, his tired old eyes gazing out at the winter rain that was drenching San Francisco's Chinatown.

"Father," said Kwan Kim, "why did you do it?"

The old man jumped. He glanced swiftly at the chest; then slowly his gaze crept up to the boy's face.

"Do what, my son?"

"Why did you do it?" reiterated Kwan Kim, the unlighted cigarette between his fingers. "It took me two long years to save that five hundred dollars. It was not much; but it would have paid your passage back to China and kept you in comfort until I could send you more. And to think that you would gamble it away!"

Kwan Gar was looking out the window again.

"I saw Ah Yet this morning," went on Kwan Kim.

"He told me you were at Loy Kee's last night. He said everyone noticed it because you had not been there for years. He told me you lost heavily. Father, did you lose it—all?"

"All!" groaned Kwan Gar.

Kwan Kim made an odd sound with his lips, a sound that is difficult to spell in English. It is peculiarly Chinese, and expresses mingled anger and contempt.

"You should have known that you would lose it! *Haie!* Things are not what they were twenty years ago when you were the luckiest *fan tan* player in Chinatown. To-day there are no honest gamblers. You were robbed."

The old man swung around.

"Do you think that, Ah Kim? Do you think that? I have been wondering how it all happened so quickly; but I—I am old. I thought it was that."

"You were robbed," repeated Kwan Kim. "Ah Yet told me it was pitiful the way that vulture, Loy Kee, took your money. Well, it is gone. There is nothing to do, I suppose, but start all over again. I am very sorry for you, father. I know how your old heart hungers to return to your native village in China. But now——"

"*Aih!* It is for you I am sorry, my son! It is true that I do want to go back. I want to smell the plum blossoms once more, and I want to die among my own people there in the village of the Kwans. But I did not want to take your money. I am not blind, my son. I know that you are soon to marry Ah

Lo, the moon-bright daughter of my friend Chun Moy; and I know you feel it keenly because I cannot make Chun Moy the usual betrothal present. I——"

"Do not worry about us," Kwan Kim broke in gently. "Ah Lo and I are young; we have an American education; and we have our lives before us. It is my filial duty——"

"But I have some pride left, Ah Kim! I have suffered more than you know because all these years I have been sick and worthless and a burden on you. The sight of that money gave me an idea. There was only one way that I could help you, and I took that way. I never thought of losing. I felt certain that my old luck would return. I was going to play until I had won enough to pay my way to China; then I would not have to touch a single copper *cash* of your hard-earned money. But—I lost it all!"

Kwan Kim said nothing. The old man turned again and gazed sadly out of the window. There was no sound but the melancholy drum of rain on tin and gravel roofs.

A moment later Kwan Gar heard a door close softly. He looked around. Kwan Kim had left.

For a space the old man blinked stupidly at the door, struggling with the memory of something that was but half-formed in his mind. Then, suddenly, it came to him. It was the sound of the chest being closed. Kwan Kim, while his father stared out of the window, had opened the chest again—and closed it cautiously.

For another moment then Kwan Gar frowned at the camphor-wood chest; and, slowly, a suspicion crept

into his mind. He got to his feet, shuffled across the room, and opened the chest. A hissing intake of breath betrayed his dismay and alarm. Still hoping, he dropped to his knees and began searching. He soon gave it up.

The loaded revolver they always kept in the top drawer of the chest was gone.

II

Above the drone of winter rain on window and tin roof rose the sudden and unmistakable sound of a revolver shot—dull, blank, yet pregnant with sinister meaning. Then—they seemed to be everywhere—the shrill call of police whistles.

Chun Moy, learned and venerable editor of *The Earnest Compendium of Chinese Classic Thought,* did not raise his head; but over his horn-rimmed glasses he looked across the desk at his daughter, Ah Lo, who, at the same instant glanced up at him with alarm in her wide dark eyes.

"The *tongs!*" exclaimed the girl in musical Cantonese.

Chun Moy dipped his camelhair brush in the jar of *Azure of Heaven* ink and put the final downward, heavy strokes to the ideograph he had started.

"You are no doubt correct, Ah Lo. This *tong* war gives our people a bad name. Here I have just finished a poem entitled *'Chinese Philosophy has made the Chinese Heart a Throne of Contentment and Enduring Peace.'* And now"—Chun Moy sighed deeply—"some *tong* man punctuates my poem with a bullet."

"And four slain already this week! Oh, how piteous! Father—listen!"

Someone with swift but stealthy tread went down the hall past the door of Chun Moy's office. Ah Lo listened, her pretty head perked sidewise like a bird's, her eyes bright as jewels, her lips like a crimson rosebud. Men—and women—white and yellow, always looked around when Ah Lo passed down the street. From the gold and jade ornament in her sleek black hair to the embroidery that edged her Chinese pantaloons of Shantung silk she was decidedly and beautifully Chinese. But there were two things about her that were American. One, a trifling but noticeable detail, was her high French shoes. The other, equally noticeable but not at all trifling, was the radiant glow, the animation that life in an American college had put in the girl's face.

Chun Moy's office was on the top floor of Chinatown's tallest and quietest building. Through the rain that streamed down the window Ah Lo could see a jumble of tin and gravel roofs. On warm days, with the window open, she could hear the rattle of dishes in the restaurant on the ground floor; on warm evenings she often heard the eager yet cautious "*yet, kee, sam*—" of the players in Loy Kee's gambling rooms above the restaurant.

Being Chinese, Chun Moy and his family lived in rooms adjoining the office. This office was a small room. The desk was by the window. One door opened into the hall; the other into the living-rooms. The walls were lined with books. In one corner of

the room, resting on stools, were two heavy and beautifully lacquered coffins. Chun Moy was far from being rich; but he had dutifully provided against the day when he and Ah Lo's mother would die and be shipped back to Canton for burial in the cemetery of the Chuns.

The shuffling footsteps died away down the hall. Somewhere a door slammed. Then silence.

"The original idea of the *tongs* was good," said Chun Moy; "but it has degenerated into something that is wholly bad. It is strange that the white foreign devils can do nothing about it. They have many strange laws, and many officials with loud voices and rough hands."

"Father, I was just reading about that," said Ah Lo, picking up *The Chronicle* that lay on the desk before her. "Last night the chief of police had a long conference with the Government officials. They have made what they call a momentous and far-reaching decision. Shall I read it to you?"

Chun Moy grunted indifferently. He hadn't a great deal of confidence in anything done by the American officials.

Ah Lo opened her lips to read, but at that instant the hall door was flung open—silently. A young Chinese sprang in. Swiftly, soundlessly, he closed the door, and stood with his back to it, his slant eyes narrowed, his breath coming in quick short gasps.

"Kwan Kim!" cried father and daughter in unison.

"Do not talk!" Kwan Kim spoke quickly. "Listen: I have just killed Loy Kee, the gambler. The——"

Ah Lo flung up her hands, a low cry of horror and dismay on her lips.

"*Haie-e!*" Chun Moy sprang to his feet with the cry. "Why did you do that? And why——"

Kwan Kim stepped away from the door. "I will tell you everything later. Now there is no time. The foreign devil police are all around. They were watching for *tong* men. They heard the shot. They have the place surrounded. Hide me, Chun Moy!"

Chun Moy went to the door and locked it. Then he returned to his desk and faced Kwan Kim.

"You have done wrong, Kwan Kim," said Chun Moy. "You have fanned the flame of abuse that the foreign devils have set against our people because of the continued bloodshed in the Chinese quarter. You——"

Chun Moy checked his words as someone ran down the hall past the door. There was the sound of a scuffle, again a door slammed; then silence save for the steady drumming of the rain on the roofs.

"You do not seem to realise what you have done," continued Chun Moy. "Your father is my life-long friend. You and Ah Lo grew up together. It is but three days gone since I posted the announcement of Ah Lo's betrothal to you. And now—now you come to me with blood on your hands and ask me to hide you."

"There is no time——"

"No murderer shall find refuge in my house!" Chun Moy cut in. "Unless you speak quickly and show me that you were justified in what you have done,

I will consider it my duty to turn you over to the police."

Kwan Kim turned pleading eyes to Ah Lo; but the girl bowed her head as though to hide the pity and consternation that shone in her eyes.

"I did not mean to kill him," said Kwan Kim. "And I did not want to tell you anything about the matter. It is this way." In rapid Cantonese, Kwan Kim told about the money he had saved to send his father back to China and how his father had lost it all in a crooked game at Loy Kee's. At the point of a pistol he had forced Loy Kee to return the money. As he made to pick up the money, Loy Kee had attacked him. In the scuffle the gun was discharged. Loy Kee fell. Kwan Kim grabbed the five hundred dollars and fled. Everywhere he turned, he heard the police whistles, and men running. Finding himself cornered in the building, he took off the rubbers he had worn over his slippers in the wet street, and hastened to Chun Moy's room.

Chun Moy was staring out the window at the rain. Now he swung about sharply.

"Loy Kee recognised you, of course?"

"Yes, but Loy Kee is dead. Anyway, he would tell the police nothing."

"That is quite true. Who else saw you?"

"No one."

Chun Moy grunted, and pulled thoughtfully at his chin. "Give me the money and the gun, Kwan Kim." When these had been laid on the desk, Chun Moy handed them to Ah Lo. "Go quickly and hide them.

Do not return here." Then he turned again to Kwan Kim. "Now——"

Someone tried the door. The two men looked up in surprise. They had not heard anyone come down the hall.

Chun Moy gestured imperatively, stepped to one of the coffins, removed the books that had been thrown on it, and raised the lid. Kwan Kim got in and lay down, face up, like a corpse. Chun Moy dropped the lid and put the books back on it. Then he slipped a pamphlet on the *Sayings of Lu-tsu* under the lid that Kwan Kim might have air. The one at the door had ceased rattling the knob and was rapping sharply with the ends of his finger-nails. Chun Moy went to his desk, picked up his brush-pen, then crossed to the door and opened it.

Kwan Gar glided in. He closed the door quickly. Chun Moy locked it. The two old men walked to the window by Chun Moy's desk.

"My friend, have you seen Kwan Kim?"

Chun Moy shook his head. He knew it was best not to tell the old man too much.

"Did you hear a shot?"

"I believe I did hear something that might have been a pistol shot. Why?"

The old man did not reply at once. Apparently, it was a hard moment for him.

"Alas, venerable Chun, I have done a terrible thing!" groaned Kwan Gar. "And I am afraid that my son, in trying to set right what I did wrong, has done

something even worse. I thought—I thought perhaps he came here to hide."

"If he should come here to hide you should not be here. You had better go home. Perhaps everything——"

There was a heavy step in the hall. Instantly the two Chinese knew it was the tread of a white foreign devil. The knob rattled, then knuckles drummed imperatively on the panel.

Chun Moy stood for a breath in indecision; then he caught Kwan Gar by the wrist and led him across the room. He opened the lid of the other coffin. Kwan Gar lay down in it, face up like a corpse. Chun Moy wadded a booklet on *Kung Fu Tse as a Politician and as a Philosopher* and put it beneath the lid that the man inside might not suffocate. Then he spread a few books on the coffin, picked up his pen again, and went to the door.

"Who is there?" he called out in his slow, careful English while he glanced around the room. Everything appeared to be in order.

"Lyons. Detective Lyons. Open up, Chun!"

Chun Moy opened the door, then closed it again. This time he did not lock it.

"I heard a shot," he told the detective. "Immediately I locked my door. Is it the *tongs* again?"

"The *tongs—yet!*" replied Detective Lyons. He was a big man, red-faced and perspiring. "Got Loy Kee this time. I think Loy knows who did it, but he won't cough up a thing except 'no savvy, no savvy.'"

The old editor laid his pen down. He folded his hands across his stomach.

"And Loy Kee? He will live?"

"Got a ditch ploughed across his forehead, but he'll live, I'm sorry to say."

Chun Moy blinked, but said nothing.

"We have the place surrounded and are searching every room," went on the officer. "I came up to tell you that I want you to help me question several Chinks we found hiding downstairs and others we expect to find."

"I am willing to help you in every way, Mr. Lyons."

"I know it, Chun. You're a square Chink. But just the same, don't forget that I'll put them over the ropes again with our own interpreter."

"Of course." Chun Moy bowed to hide his smile.

"I'll beat it now," concluded the detective. "This is my busy day. No one can leave this building. We got every door, window, alley and roof guarded. We're going to search every nook and cranny of this old joint if it takes all winter. This is one *tong* man whose goose is cooked."

He started for the door.

"Wait!" cried a voice, and Detective Lyons wheeled around. Ah Lo had stepped in from the living rooms. Her face was pale, her dark eyes narrow and gleaming with an eager light. "Wait!" repeated Ah Lo. "I know who shot Loy Kee. I know where he is. He——"

"Pa lok!" cried Chu Moy. "Stop! Are you——"

"Not a word, father!" broke in Ah Lo in Cantonese. "You must trust me. Listen, and you shall under-

stand!" She turned to the detective and spoke in English. "My father knows nothing of this. I was here alone when it happened. A man came to the door. I recognised him as a *tong* gunman and wanted to order him away but was afraid. Then you rapped on the door. The *tong* man hid. Before I could think what to do, my father came in. He heard you, and went to the door. I went back to the hall but hid by the door and listened. And now——"

Ah Lo paused. She stood motionless, scarcely breathing, her gaze on the floor. Then, with sudden decision, she stepped quickly to one of the coffins and flung up the lid. No one saw her slip a revolver from beneath her blouse and drop it inside the coffin.

"There!" cried Ah Lo, pointing. "He shot Loy Kee!"

The man in the coffin sat up. It was Kwan Kim's father!

The detective pounced on the old man, dragged him out of the coffin, and pocketed the gun. He made a swift search of Kwan Gar's clothes, then examined the weapon. One cartridge had been exploded.

"Ummh! Old man, waddye got to say 'bout this, eh?"

Kwan Gar, not understanding a word of English, looked dazedly from the detective to Ah Lo, and said nothing.

"No savvy talk, eh? Young lady, tell him he's under arrest for shooting Loy Kee. Ask him what he has to say about it."

Ah Lo spoke in rapid Cantonese:

"Sir, listen closely to what I say! Kwan Kim accidentally shot Loy Kee while getting back the money you lost. He is in hiding, but he cannot escape. There is only one way to save your son. You must tell the official that you did the shooting. Will you do that?"

Kwan Gar bobbed his head energetically. That much the detective understood. He did not know that the old man was saying: "I will tell them anything to save my son."

"Good!" exclaimed Ah Lo. "But remember this: You must tell the officials nothing, absolutely nothing, except that you are a *tong* man and that the shooting of Loy Kee was a *tong* affair. Understand?"

"I understand. I will tell them only what you say. I suppose I shall be hung?"

"Loy Kee did not die; so you shall not be hung. More than that, sir, I dare not tell you now. And please, sir, keep your tongue in your cheek. *Tsau kom lok!*"

Ah Lo turned to the impatient detective.

"Kwan Gar says that he did the shooting. He is willing to take the punishment. But you must understand that it is a *tong* affair, and that it is useless to question either Loy Kee or Kwan Gar, for neither dares to talk."

"Fair enough!" grinned Lyons. "I know better than to waste time on Loy Kee. As for this old highbinder—well, he's got a little surprise coming!"

. . . . . .

There was a big wedding, a banquet that lasted for three days and nights. Then with the five hundred dollars Kwan Kim had recovered from the gambler, he bought a grocery store, and settled down.

The winter rains passed. Spring came. Chinatown blossomed out in its brightest and happiest colours. And with spring came a long letter from Kwan Kim's father.

"——so it was a great surprise to me," the letter concluded. "I could hardly believe that the white foreign devil Government really intended to send me back to my old home in China and pay all my expenses. I wanted to thank them; but I remembered what Ah Lo had warned me, so I kept my tongue in my cheek. There were three of us on the boat: Feng Soi, an old gunman for the Bin How *tong;* and Gin Hop, who, as you know, was the worst killer in Chinatown. We were well fed and well treated, and apparently it is a great honour to be deported by the rich American Government.

"It has just entered my old mind that perhaps Ah Lo knew something of this when she got me to say I was a *tong* man and had shot Loy Kee over a *tong* matter. Perhaps she read all about it in that honourable American paper I saw on her desk. *Ho toy!*"

THE MYSTERY OF THE MISSING HANDS

I

THEY are yellowed and musty with the years that have flown, these clippings and notes of mine that relate to the strange case of the missing hands; but how vividly they bring back to me the memory of those mysterious murders that baffled the police of every California city having a Chinese Quarter! I was a police reporter on that black night when the first case was brought to my attention; and I know that when we examined the body of Lee Yick his left hand was missing, and that it was never found. I know that the strange stories that came in from the Chinese quarters of San Jose and Sacramento were true stories. I know, now, what no other white man knows—for they are still unsolved mysteries on police records. I know, in a word, the mystery of the missing hands.

It was but last night, while we lingered over our rice cakes and preserved ginger at the *Hang Far Low,* that my good friend Chan Yin Do told me the story. He did not know about the missing hand murders. When he told me that weird tale of the Pirate of a Hundred Horrors, of Jue Yen, the beautiful flower-girl, and of the noble sons of Owoyong Foo Wing, he did not know that he was unfolding to my eager

ears that which I desired most to hear—the solution of the missing hand mysteries.

Just as the tangled threads of this curious case came to my attention, so I shall present them here, save that I find it necessary to eliminate parts of the story as told to me by Chan Yin Do, and to soften his phraseology here and there. For the Chinese are a strange people; and although Chan and I have long been close friends, his nature is incomprehensible to me, and the soul of him is a sealed book to my Occidental eyes. Chan is a graduate of one of our foremost colleges; he is cultured and refined; the Chinese say his liver is large with benevolence; and I have never known him to do an unkind act. Yet when he told me this tale of the Pirate of a Hundred Horrors, of Jue Yen, the beautiful flower-girl, and of the noble sons of Owoyong Foo Wing, he told me things that sent chills creeping down my spine, but which brought from him only an appreciative, gleeful chuckle.

First, then, the mystery of the missing hands as recorded in these clippings and notes of mine, yellowed and musty with the years that have flown:

II

December 11, 189—. Had a very singular case last night. Was at the station as usual playing seven-up with the night captain of detectives and Merton, of the Chinatown plain-clothes squad. Had 'phoned my stuff in—the usual run of hold-ups, petty robberies, and a suicide. It was a nasty night, a strong wind off the Pacific, and cold, gusty rain.

Several times I had started to leave, but the captain stopped me. "Stick around awhile," he said. "Something will happen yet. Something always happens on a night like this."

I was standing by the window looking out at the black belch of rain that beat incessantly on the walk, when the 'phone rang. I turned swiftly and answered: "Detectives' office; Captain Warren speaking." It was a trick of mine that had often given me the first inkling of a big story. Over the wire came the voice of one of the squadmen in Chinatown: "Send up a couple of men at once. There's been a murder or something in——" That much I heard, then the captain tore the receiver from my grasp and elbowed me aside.

When Captain Warren hung up, he snapped out an order for Green to stay on the desk, ordered the wagon out, directed Merton to accompany him, and gruffly invited me. "Funny thing!" he grunted, when we were off; "Smith heard the man yell, found the cellar door open, blood on the floor, but can't find the body. Says the murderers couldn't have got away with it."

Smith was waiting for us at the curb in front of Lee Yick's vegetable store. There was a grayish pallor on his usually florid face. With a big, nervous hand he wiped the raindrops from his cheeks.

"Captain, this has got me," he said apologetically. "We heard the yelling, found the cellar door open, and heard steps in the upper room. When we got there. two Chinks were going through the skylight.

Dave told me to go back and look for Lee Yick. He and Joe followed the Chinks, but lost them. I looked all around but couldn't find Lee. In the cellar I found a pool of blood. And while I stood looking down at it, something brushed my face—something like a human hand. My light went out just then and—and I came out to 'phone you."

For a moment there was no sound, save the steady drumming of rain on the walks and tin roofs. Captain Warren stared hard at the squadman. Then he swore under his breath and, with his night lantern, led the way down the littered stairs to the cellar. The cellar was pitch dark; a heavy impenetrable black.

On the floor, something gleamed dully in the uncertain light from the captain's lantern.

"There it is!" whispered Smith; and his hoarse whisper hissed and echoed through the whole cellar.

We drew near and stared down at it. As I bent over, something brushed my face—something like a groping hand.

The captain, calmer than the rest of us, sprang back and turned his lantern towards the ceiling. A bamboo pole had been slung across two rafters. Lee Yick hung head-down, his knees bound over the bamboo pole. He was dead.

It was his right hand that had brushed my face. His left hand had been severed at the wrist. The missing hand has not been found.

The captain asked me to make no mention of the missing hand, nor of the fact that no motive was

found for the crime. The Chinese refused to tell what they knew—if they knew anything. There was no evidence of robbery. There appeared to be no reason why Lee Yick had been suspended head-down from that bamboo pole; no reason why that left wrist had been severed.

I gave Captain Warren my promise, and I kept it. My story went in stripped of all Oriental mystery. Lee Yick had been murdered, and robbed, I wrote. I did not name the only thing that had been taken. I did not mention the missing hand.

And now a clipping from a San Jose paper, dated in January of the following year:

Joe Wing, proprietor of a pawnshop in Chinatown, was murdered last night and the body mutilated by unknown assailants. Chinatown police, attracted by strange cries, entered the basement of the pawnshop at an early hour this morning and found Wing suspended head-down from the rafters. He was dead.

A very singular thing, and one that throws a shadow of Oriental mystery over the crime is the fact that Joe Wing's left hand had been severed at the wrist. Despite every effort by the police, this missing hand has not been found.

No motive is known for the crime. The police declare there was no evidence of robbery.

Very little is known about Wing and nothing could be learned from other Chinese residents. He

came to San Jose a few years ago and opened his pawnshop. He has lived to himself, and has never been in trouble with the police.

Ten minutes after I had read that item I slapped it down on the desk in front of Captain Warren. I recall very clearly the strange look that came into his face as he read it.

"Captain," I said, "what does this mean?"

He shook his head. "Looks like the gang that bumped off Joe Wing is the same that killed Lee Yick. But that doesn't get us very far. Why did they do it? And is this to be the last missing hand murder? I'm stumped, and I admit it."

"There's a reason for severing that left hand," I said, after a silence. "Do you suppose those two Chinks had a ring the murderers wanted?"

Captain Warren snorted. "Dammit, man, you don't have to string a man up by his knees to a rafter and hack off his hand just to get a ring!"

From my notes again:

February 12, 189—. Joe Wing *did* have a ring! And he wore it on the little finger of his left hand! It was a ring of Chinese gold, a seal ring carved with some character that not one of the other Chinese residents remembers ever having read. At least, they wouldn't admit having read it. The police are watching the pawnshops for the ring.

February 13, 189—. I told Captain Warren last night about the seal ring that Joe Wing had worn on his left hand. He admitted then that he had been impressed by my suggestion and that he had made inquiries to learn if Lee Yick had worn a ring on the missing hand. Had learned nothing definite. Some of Lee's friends claim he wore a ring; others claimed he didn't. Those who think he did, differ as to the sort of ring. The captain thinks the ring doesn't enter into the case. He seems more anxious to learn why the victims were strung up feet first.

April 2, 189—. The missing hand again! This time in Sacramento. The victim was Pow Lung, a cook. He was a very poor man. Robbery couldn't have been the motive. Like the others, Pow Lung was found hanging head-down from the ceiling, and was dead from knife wounds. His left hand had been removed at the wrist. This missing hand has not been found. No motive is known for the murder, and there is not a single clue to the criminals. I made diligent inquiry and established the fact that Pow Lung had never been seen with a ring on either hand.

April 4, 189—. Talked to-day with Wah Sin Lo, one of the oldest residents of San Francisco's Chinese Quarter. He told me what Captain Warren had already told me—that the missing hand murders had not been caused by any *tong* war or

by the acts of any Chinese secret society. I came away with the impression that the old Oriental knows, or thinks he knows, what was behind those strange crimes, but is afraid to tell.

JULY 20, 189—. No more missing hand murders; and not a clue to the three recorded above. Police have given it up. When I asked Captain Warren to-day what progress he was making with the case, he swore, and pretended to be very busy.

There are more clippings and notes referring to the missing hand murders, but none of them throw any light on the mystery. They run over a period of years following the date of the Sacramento case, and from them I gather only one outstanding fact: The murders ceased as abruptly and as mysteriously as they began.

Most of these notes and clippings offer suggestions as to the solution of the mystery; they try to establish a motive behind those weird Oriental crimes. None of them will be presented here. Now that I know the truth, I realise how pitifully ridiculous were the careful, painstaking analyses we made at the time. Not one of our deductions even remotely approached the real solution. Not one of us solved the mystery of the missing hands as I know it now, as it was given to me but last night by my good friend Chan Yin Do, who told me that strange tale of the Pirate of a Hundred Horrors, of Jue Yen, the beautiful flower-girl, and of the great evil she brought upon the noble sons of Owoyong Foo Wing.

III

"I will tell you a story," so said Chan Yin Do. "And it is a true story," thus he assured me, widening his long, black eyes. "I know it is true for I have heard it many times in many homes in the province of Kwangtung. Anyone in the villages along the Si-kiang will tell you that it is a true story. But I know it is a true story, because the sons of Owoyong told it to me, because they showed me the four seal rings, and because they showed me the four severed hands."

On the instant, I was all attention. It had been many years since those missing hand murders; but I had not forgotten them. I had not forgotten that so far as I had ever learned there were only three such crimes, only three missing hands. And Chan Yin Do had said he saw four hands. While I was still puzzling with the strange thoughts that flashed through my mind, Chan Yin Do drained his bowl of tea, smacked his lips with satisfaction, and continued:

. . . . . .

On the banks of the Si-kiang, beyond the pass named Shau-hing-hap, many days by *ho-tau* to the west of the great city of Canton, there dwelt a rich man of the family of Owoyong. Because he was both rich and noble he was named *Foo Wing*. Owoyong Foo Wing had accumulated wealth and learning, and all the blessings that come to those whose *fung-shui* is good, and who are never lacking in their duty to their ancestors. He had ten acres of land, four water buffaloes, thirty ducks, and three wives. He had

three sons to preserve his family name; and plenty of bamboo to build houses for his sons when they should take wives.

To the eldest son, Owoyong Foo Wing had given the name of *You Do,* which in your language signifies *Glory to Ancestors.* To the second son he had given the name of *Jung,* meaning *A Loyal One.* So, having a son that was to bring glory to his ancestors, another that would be always loyal to the honour of the family name, he gave to the third son the name of *Ah Sam,* which means merely *Number 3.*

Now, because Owoyong Foo Wing knew the advantage of learning, he had fetched a teacher from Canton, and the three boys had been taught *The Classic for Boys,* the *Thousand-word Classic,* and *The Twenty-four Patterns of Filial Piety.* They could recite many passages from *The Analects of Kung Fu Tse,* and they could read many characters from the strange, old yellow books and scrolls in their father's house. But there was one thing they could not read. They could not read the secret of the seal rings.

As each boy arrived at the age of fifteen, Owoyong Foo Wing gave him a seal ring of soft, Chinese gold bearing a strange inscription. The inscription on each ring was different. The sons of Owoyong wore these rings always, but not one of them could read the character on the ring his father gave him.

One day, when Ah Sam had reached the age of twenty, his father gave him five piculs of rice, and sent him with a neighbour's son on a *ho-tau* down the river to Canton. When the rice had been sold, and

the silver was in Ah Sam's purse, the neighbour's son said: "Come with me, now, and I will show you a pleasant time." And he led the way down to the river where, for a few *cash,* a woman took them in her smelly sampan down the Pearl River to a beautiful flower-boat, which bore the name of *Blushing Cheeks.* They stepped aboard and paused before one of the silk-curtained windows; and at once a girl came to the window and smiled at them. She was a beautiful girl. Her cheeks were the colour of a ripening peach; her black hair was as glossy as Shantung silk and gleaming with gold and jade ornaments; and she knew just how to narrow her bright eyes—oh, so invitingly! Ah Sam, who had never before been on a flower-boat, and had never been smiled upon by a flower-girl, felt strangely thrilled, and he leaned against the window and looked at the girl hungrily.

"Ko sing a?" inquired the flower-girl softly, tilting her pretty head and half-closing her beautiful eyes.

Ah Sam became suddenly frightened. Although his companion tried to stay him, he ran back to where the old woman waited for them with her sampan.

"You are very foolish," said the neighbour's son, angrily. "For a small present, Jue Yen would have played for us on her guitar; she would have sung songs to us; and we should have feasted on cakes and preserved fruits and wine."

"But why did she ask my family name?"

"What! Don't you know?"

Ah Sam shook his head.

"*Haie-e!* For a son of Owoyong, you are very stupid!" exclaimed the neighbour's son.

So on the long journey up the Si-kiang he told Ah Sam many things the youngest son of Owoyong did not know, and which it would have been just as well had he not learned. For when Ah Sam returned to his father's gardens he came to think much of the beautiful flower-girl, Jue Yen, and very little of tilling his father's fields. When his brothers would find him sitting by the river, silent as a Buddha, and with the dreamy eyes of an opium smoker, they would say: "*Mat ye sz kon,* younger brother?" And Ah Sam would start as though suddenly awakened and would reply: "Nothing is the matter, elder brothers; I was counting the ducks."

One day Owoyong Foo Wing called Ah Sam to him, and said: "My son, here are three taels of silver. Go into the city and buy some *jun liu sum yung do yin yeuk tsau,* for your father is growing old and has need of that *ginseng* tonic. Also it is time that you learned more about bargaining."

So Ah Sam put on his best jacket of silk, his dark crêpe trousers, his white leggings, and embroidered slippers of velvet, and went to Canton; and when he had attended to his father's business he hired a sampan and sought out the flower-boat which was named *Blushing Cheeks,* and again he stood by the silk-curtained window, and again the beautiful flower-girl smiled at him and half-closed her dark eyes—oh, so invitingly.

"*Ko sing a?*" asked Jue Yen softly. "What is your lofty surname?"

"I am of the family of Owoyong," replied Ah Sam, promptly.

Then Jue Yen inclined her pretty head and smiled at Ah Sam; and again Ah Sam felt strangely thrilled. He leaned against the window and spoke eagerly:

"You are more beautiful than the moon, Jue Yen; and your eyes are as bright as clearest jade. I have a poor present which I ask that you be so gracious as to accept."

. . . . . .

And now I must tell you that for many seasons there had been a very fierce pirate around Canton who preyed on small ships returning from the Malay Peninsula, Formosa, and other lands, laden with rich goods, opium and pearls, and costly spices. I cannot tell you his true family name, for no one knew it. Once when one of his band asked him, the pirate turned on him fiercely, and cried: "Clan names are for such as you. I have need of none. I was sired by a dragon and born of a typhoon; and the sharks whom I feed with fools like you will worship me as their ancestor." And with that he struck the poor fellow down and flung him overboard, and he was seen no more. After that no one ever again asked the pirate his family name. And so, because of his terrible cruelty, he became known along the Chinese coasts and waterways as "The Pirate of a Hundred Horrors."

At this same time there lived in Canton a small merchant known by the name of Wong, whose given

name was Ching, signifying *Perfect*. And Wong Ching was perfect in his ways, dealing honestly with all, worshipping his ancestors as one should, and making frequent sacrifices to the tutelary gods at the *Temple of the Five Hundred Genii*. Thus, because of his piety, and because his liver was large with benevolence, he gained the confidence and respect of all, and was known as Wong the Perfect.

Wong Ching owned a slave girl, who had grown to love him very much; and because she was always happy when serving him, he gave her the name of *Happy Heart*. Wong was very fond of Happy Heart, and made her many presents; and he often told her that some day he would take her as a secondary wife, and then she need be a slave no more. Which made Happy Heart very happy, indeed.

Like so many others in Canton, Wong Ching owned a small boat that he used to take out on fishing trips, and occasionally to Macao to buy opium when he could make a sharp bargain. One time he took Happy Heart with him on a two-day fishing trip, and so she learned about the boat and where it was tied. Thus, on another day when Wong told her he was going fishing, but refused to let her accompany him, she went at night down to her master's boat; and, by bribing one of the fishermen, she got aboard and hid herself. When the boat was below Whampoa, where the big ships lighted, she arrayed herself in her best and presented herself before her master. Wong was so angry he threatened to kill her, but with tears and smiles she softened his heart and he pretended to for-

give her. She learned, soon, that this was no fishing trip; and when they returned to Canton she knew what no one else in Canton knew, save those stupid-looking fishermen on Wong's boat. She knew that her master, Wong, the Perfect, when he was not a pious merchant, was none other than that infamous Pirate of a Hundred Horrors.

When Wong appeared to forgive Happy Heart, he had it in his mind to drown her before they returned to Canton, for he did not intend that any slave girl should know the secret of his life. But by the time the trip was over, the Pirate was so favourably impressed with the loyalty of the clever slave girl, that he decided to make use of her. After that, she gained much useful information for Wong, the Pirate, from foolish young men who admired her. And when they tried to make a good impression by telling all about their father's business and fortunes, not one of them ever dreamed that Jue Yen, the beautiful flower-girl, was the favourite slave of Wong Ching, the Pirate of a Hundred Horrors.

. . . . . .

. . . So, after awhile, when Ah Sam and Jue Yen were eating Shensi almonds, and drinking rose wine and smoking cigarettes, Jue Yen leaned across the lacquered table and pointed to the seal ring on Ah Sam's finger: "What a strange ring!" she said. "Tell me what that character signifies."

Quickly, Ah Sam drew his hand away, and for about the time it takes to repeat *The First Prayer of One*

who is Lost, he was silent. The ring reminded him of his honourable father. And he was ashamed.

Now, Jue Yen knew much about the ways of men. She had seen Ah Sam start; and she knew at once that there was some secret about the ring. . . . She arose and fetched another jar of wine.

"I should be very happy if all men were as good to me as you," said Jue Yen, pouring Ah Sam a bowl of the heady wine. And when Ah Sam looked upon her smiles, and drank of her wine, the memory of his father's face seemed to fade, and he saw only the tantalising mouth and inviting eyes of beautiful Jue Yen.

Jue Yen drank cautiously, but she kept Ah Sam's bowl always filled. Finally, when she saw he was in wine, she laid her dainty perfumed hand on his, and looked into his eyes: "You do not love me," she told him. "What do I care for your old ring? Nothing! I want you to tell me just to prove that you love me."

At first Ah Sam was angry. He had been very happy, and he did not want to talk about the ring. He did not want to be reminded of his father and his brothers. He did not want anything to cast a shadow on that bright hour with Jue Yen. So he said: "If I tell you about the ring, will you promise not to mention it again?"

"I promise," replied Jue Yen quickly, for she knew a promise was easily broken.

Ah Sam looked down at the ring on his finger, and spoke slowly: "My honourable father is a very rich

man. He owns much land, many buffaloes, and ducks. Also he has money out at good interest. So we live very happily on our little farm, my father and two brothers, and a few servants.

"When I was fifteen, my father called me to him and said: 'My son, there is a lesson I would have you learn, and that is this: Next to filial piety, the greatest virtue is fraternal unity. Cling to your brothers, and to the house of your father. I give you this ring that you may always have a reminder of what I have said. Let it never be taken from your finger. You cannot read the character engraved on the ring—not now; but it shall be made plain to you some day. And great fortune shall be yours when you have learned the secret of the seal.' "

"A great fortune!" breathed Jue Yen.

"I cannot read the character on the ring because it is not complete," went on Ah Sam. "My brothers each have a ring like this, but bearing a different inscription. The character on theirs is also incomplete. My father had them made so. The key is given on a fourth ring. On this fourth ring appear the ideographs that are needed to complete the characters on our rings. Without these ideographs, the inscriptions on our rings are meaningless. With them, the characters on our three rings make a complete sentence."

"And the fourth ring?" breathed Jue Yen. "Your father wears that?"

"My father carries the fourth ring beneath his tunic on a silk neck-cord. I have never seen it."

Very thoughtfully, Jue Yen refilled Ah Sam's bowl. She raised hers to her painted lips: "May the beneficent gods watch over that great fortune!" she said. And over her bowl she watched Ah Sam drain his; then she set hers down untouched.

. . . Night had fallen when a sampan carried the youngest son of Owoyong away from the flower-boat of *Blushing Cheeks*. Stupid with drugged wine, he did not know that the seal ring of his father was no longer on his finger, but was hidden in Jue Yen's stocking. He did not know that the junk on which he was flung with a curse and a handful of *cash* was headed for a far port of many days' journey.

That night Wong Ching made Jue Yen his secondary wife; and by the hour of morning rice they were on a chartered *ho-tau* many miles from Canton. While the Pirate of a Hundred Horrors smoked his long silver-bowl pipe and scowled blackly at his men, Jue Yen sat at his feet on the sun-warmed deck, smiling happily as she listened to the strange, chanting song of the boatmen poling steadily up the Si-kiang toward the gardens of Owoyong Foo Wing.

IV

The gardens of Owoyong (continued Chan Yin Do) lay on a gentle slope that ran down to the sandy bank of the River Si, whose waters, drawn by tread pumps through bamboo piping, irrigated the land. The duck pens took up as much of the river as they did of the farm lands; and, just above them, surrounded by the neatly laid-out vegetable gardens, stood the pink and

yellow dwelling with its fence of green and feathery bamboo, its gravel walks, and blooming flowers. Beyond were the pulse and millet fields; and down the river from the duck pens were a few acres of rice.

By these rice fields, the Pirate of a Hundred Horrors tied his flat-bottomed *ho-tau,* took four of his men, armed them with long knives, and sprang ashore.

"By the time we reach the house of Owoyong, it will be mid-day rice," he told Jue Yen. "Owoyong Foo Wing will be at table with his three sons. We shall tell him we are journeying up the river and shall buy a bowl of millet and some tea. The rest will be easy," he concluded, tapping the handle of his long knife.

Now, Jue Yen had faithfully told Wong Ching everything she had learned from Ah Sam about the great fortune of Owoyong and the secret of the four seal rings; but she thought she was very wise in the ways of men, so there was one thing she did not tell the Pirate. She did not tell him that she already had the seal ring of Ah Sam in her stocking. She let Wong Ching believe that Ah Sam was at home, although she knew that could not be. When the Pirate of a Hundred Horrors had obtained the other three rings, she would then surprise him by producing the ring of Ah Sam. She thought she was very clever; but she was only very wicked.

Wong Ching and his four men found Owoyong and his two elder sons at table. The principal wife was in the kitchen, and the two inferior wives were in the fields with servants working the tread pumps. After

the usual compliments, Wong Ching gladly accepted Owoyong's invitation to share the meal. He was quick to note that the two sons wore seal rings; but he did not see Ah Sam anywhere.

Now, the Pirate of a Hundred Horrors had not told Jue Yen everything that was in his mind. He thought it a very pretty story she had told him about the four seal rings; but all the time he was thinking of the hidden treasure. "I shall get the rings if it is convenient," he told himself, "but I do not need them, for I know a way to make old Owoyong tell very quickly where his treasure is hidden."

So he said to Owoyong: "Rich and noble Owoyong, I have heard that you have three filial sons. Is that not so?"

"Perfect and venerable Wong, I have been blessed with three sons to preserve my family name," replied Owoyong proudly. "But my youngest son, Ah Sam, went to Canton and has not yet returned. I do not know what is keeping him, but he is a filial and virtuous son; so my mind is not troubled save that I sometimes fear that he may have been set upon by thieves."

"Or by the Pirate of a Hundred Horrors," said Wong Ching boldly.

"*Haie-e!* I would ask nothing better than that my sons should meet that dragon of the seas some day, for they would quickly wring his wicked neck!"

Wong Ching dashed his bowl to the floor, and sprang up.

"Then they had better be at it!" he shouted. And,

while his men leaped at the two sons, the Pirate of a Hundred Horrors put his long knife to the throat of old Owoyong Foo Wing.

The sons of Owoyong were fierce fighters, themselves; and they were quick to realise what had befallen them. The eldest son sprang to his feet, snatched a heavy tea jar off the table and flung it straight into the face of one of the pirates, while Owoyong Jung caught one of Wong's men by the wrist, tore the knife from his hand, and buried it in the pirate's breast. Seeing this, Wong Ching shouted for the sons of Owoyong to surrender or he would behead their father. Reluctantly they gave up, after which, one of the pirates ran into the kitchen and silenced the cries of the principal wife of Owoyong.

"Now," cried Wong Ching, angry over the killing of one of his men, "I want your hidden treasure."

Old Owoyong, fearful lest the pirates would slay one of his sons, made quick reply: "Beneath the dried fish in the kitchen is an old jar marked 'Preserved Dragon-eye Fruit.' It is in the jar."

One of the pirates fetched the jar and poured on the table many pieces of silver.

"There is more," cried Wong Ching, pressing the point of the knife against Owoyong's neck.

"There is no more," declared Owoyong.

"You speak falsely," shouted Wong Ching. And he ordered his men to knife one of the sons.

"Hold!" cried Owoyong. "I will tell. In a secret place beneath my bed is another jar. That is all."

So one of the pirates found this jar, and poured

more silver on the table. But still Wong Ching was not satisfied.

"I want your hidden treasure," he told Owoyong. "I want the great fortune whose hiding place is told by the seal rings."

A terrible look came upon the face of old Owoyong Foo Wing.

"*Aih-yah hoh lien!*" he cried. "Oh, how pietous! Who told you the secret of the seals? Who but my son, Ah Sam? Dog of a murderer, you have killed my son!" And the old father threw himself upon Wong Ching. . . .

(*Here I am omitting some of the details of the story as told to me by Chan Yin Do.*)

. . . And in less time than it takes to change one's jacket, Owoyong and his two sons were hanging head-down from the ceiling, their knees bound across a bamboo pole slung over the rafters.

"The hidden treasure!" cried Wong Ching. "Where is it?"

Old Owoyong coughed and choked; but before he could speak, there came from down the river where lay the pirates' *ho-tau,* a great yelling and squealing. Fearful lest their only means of escape was being cut off, Wong Ching and his men turned and fled. At the door, Wong Ching remembered the seal rings, and he came back. . . . (*Here I am omitting more of the story as told by Chan Yin Do.*)

. . . Gongs were beating. Men were shouting and running through the pulse fields towards the pirates' boat.

Wong Ching was terribly angry when he learned the cause of the commotion. A raft of crated live hogs had come down the river, and one of the pirates went aboard to buy a hog. He got into an argument with the owner over the price, and knocked him heels over head among the hogs. At that, the swine set up a hub-bub, the raftmen began shouting, and the pirate yelled at the top of his voice for his companions to come to his rescue. The pirates quickly drove the raftmen away, but the damage had been done. Wong Ching and his three men scrambled aboard their *ho-tau,* and the boatmen, keeping time with their strange, chanting cries, quickly poled the boat out into the current and down the river out of sight.

It was some time before Jue Yen got up courage to ask Wong Ching about the rings.

"*Aih!*" shouted the pirate fiercely. "Only fools listen to the chatter of women! I got no treasure. And I did not get all the rings, for one of the sons was not home. But, here: take what I did get. And may they wring your fool neck!"

The Pirate of a Hundred Horrors drew from beneath his tunic a small bundle, unwrapped it, and thrust it beneath the girl's face. There, in a yellow silk handkerchief, Jue Yen saw a seal ring tied to a crimson-stained neck cord; and with it, a seal ring on each, were the left hands of the two sons of Owoyong.

V

Many days before Ah Sam reached his home (concluded Chan Yin Do) he heard of the tragedy that

had fallen upon his father's house; for tale-bearers had told it throughout every village along the Si-kiang. His mother had been slain. His father, and his brother Jung, had died from their wounds; and while the eldest brother lay dying in the hut of a neighbour, river thieves had stolen the ducks and the water buffaloes, and had wrecked the houses and fields of Owoyong.

Ah Sam sought out his brother, You Do. Very sorrowfully he told how the flower-girl, Jue Yen, had gained possession of his seal ring. When he had finished, You Do turned his face to the wall.

"Oh, how piteous!" he cried. "Was it not enough that this tragedy fell upon the house of Owoyong? Alas, that I have lived to learn that it was because of the shameful conduct of our younger brother. Walk your way, Ah Sam, and let me never look upon your face again!"

But Ah Sam wept, and said: "Let it not be so, elder brother; for I have repented bitterly. Together we will avenge the murder of our honourable parents and our brother Jung. Then you may slay me, for I do not care to live with this shame upon me."

Thus it came about that a moon later the two remaining sons of Owoyong went at night to the temporary graves of their mother and father and their brother, Jung; and there, cutting off the head of a chicken, and sprinkling the blood upon the graves, Ah Sam raised his two good hands, and his brother raised his one good hand and the stumpy wrist of his left arm, and they took a solemn oath to recover the

seal rings and to avenge the murder of their kin, even though it took them across the Four Seas to the land of the white foreign devil, and even though it cost them their last copper *cash* and their dying breath.

And that, of course, was the proper thing to do. As anyone knows, nothing but misfortune would come to the two sons of Owoyong so long as he who slew their father walked the earth. Their *fung shui* would be always unpropitious. Their crops would be poor, and their ducks would die of strange diseases. Should the sons marry, and should sons be born to them, it would be only to mock them, for the children could not live in a house with a bad *fung shui. Haie-e!* One may as well have an ancestor who is buried in a low place where water mildews the bones, as to have one whose murder is not avenged! (And Chan Yin Do glared at me very fiercely, as though daring me to challenge his statement.)

When the murder of their kin had been avenged, and the four seal rings recovered, Ah Sam and You Do had no difficulty reading their father's message. It directed them to an uncle in Canton, of whom they had heard their father speak occasionally, and who was a wealthy and honest banker. In the bank, to the credit of the sons of Owoyong, were a thousand taels of silver with accumulated interest. On the death of Owoyong Foo Wing, the banker was to begin paying the interest to the sons of Owoyong *so long as they lived together in fraternal unity.* Of course, the uncle had heard what had befallen the house of his brother, but he could not find the two

living sons. When, years later, they presented the four seal rings, he gladly paid them enough from the inheritance to enable them to place their father's gardens in good repair, to plant crops, to buy buffaloes and ducks, to hire a geomancer to select a new burial place for their murdered kin, and to restore their ancestral tablets. Having done all this, their *fung sui* became propitious, and good fortune returned to the sons of Owoyong. From a neighbouring village they took wives; and sons were born to them. And now, when a *ho-tau* passes what was once the gardens of Owoyong, the boatmen cease their strange, chanting cries, and rest on their poles and say: "That is the village of Owoyong, where the filial sons and grandsons of Owoyong Foo Wing dwell together in fraternal unity."

Chan Yin Do refilled the bowls with the steaming Sou-chong, and reached for the sugared rice cakes.

"But you have not finished the story," I said. "You have not told me what became of the pirate—the Pirate of a Hundred Horrors."

Chan Yin Do gave me a strange look with his long, black eyes.

"We are friends," he said, "but, after all, you are one of the white foreign devils and you have very strange laws. What I must keep from a foe, I do not tell a friend. Besides, I do not know all that befell the sons of Owoyong when they crossed the Four Seas to avenge their father's murder. Perhaps some of the pirates were found in your country; and although the sons of Owoyong were but doing their filial duty, your

laws would have called it murder when they slew the pirates, and your police would have sent Ah Sam and You Do to prison—if they had caught them."

And then I told Chan Yin Do about that black night when the groping hand brushed my face when I looked up at the dead body of Lee Yick hanging head-down from a bamboo slung across the rafters, and his left hand missing. I told him of the case of Joe Wing, at San Jose, and of Pow Lung, of Sacramento. But I did not speak of them now as murders.

"The secret of the sons of Owoyong is safe with me," I told him. "But I do not understand yet. I know of only three missing hands. You speak of four. What about the fourth hand?"

"*Haie!*" chuckled Chan Yin Do, in great glee. "That was a capital joke! Ah Sam got the fourth hand. It was the left hand of the wicked flower-girl, Jue Yen!"

THE BUDDHA TWINS

I

Foo Chan Wo smacked his lips over the last morsel of his morning rice, and with much grunting and wheezing arose from the table. From a shelf he took his street hat of black Shantung silk, which he set on his head with dignified precision.

At the door he turned to his two wives; and although his voice was severe, his eyes were kind.

"Where is my *Thousand of Gold?*"

"Honourable husband," replied the principal wife, "when I told Foo San, as was my duty, she ran to her room and wept, as was her duty."

"Tell her," rumbled Foo Chan Wo, and his voice throbbed with love and sorrow—"tell her that many tears cannot change that which is changeless. . . . I shall not need her in the store until the hour before mid-day rice. *Ho hang la!*"

Muttering to himself in Cantonese, the old curio-dealer moved ponderously down the narrow stairs to his store. When he had taken down the shutters from the windows that faced Grant Avenue, the main thoroughfare of San Francisco's Chinese Quarter, he sat down at his desk; but instead of picking up his long-

stemmed pipe, as was his custom, he opened a drawer and got out a narrow strip of crimson paper, a camel-hair brush, and a small jar of *Satin Darkness* Ink. Slowly, and with much facial contortion, Foo Chan Wo began writing.

From top to bottom, the strip had been filled with queer black characters when the merchant laid down his brush and went out to the front of the store. He pasted the crimson strip on a panel between one window and the door; then he re-entered the store and sat down at his desk.

"*Aih!*" rumbled Foo, picking up his pipe. "I shall eat well when this is over; for although I have made a friend of Ah Fong, whom I need, I have made an enemy of Louie Chang, whom I fear."

II

Shortly before the hour of mid-day rice, Ah Fong paused before the curio store. With his slant eyes agleam he read the characters on the crimson strip, which told what Ah Fong already knew—that the daughter of Foo Chan Wo had been betrothed to him that day. Then, with unhurried step, Ah Fong entered the store.

He was tall for a Chinese, and his garb of dull black Canton *crêpe* hung about his bony form like foreign devil emblems of mourning. At sight of him, little Foo San dropped the specimens of Foochow lacquer-ware she had been examining, and fled upstairs.

Ah Fong watched the girl until she disappeared;

then he turned to Foo Chan Wo and spoke sharply.

"She lacks courtesy!"

"So?" Foo rumbled in his pipe. "Then how fortunate that she is to wed one who will set such a perfect example!"

"I will teach her manners, sure enough," cried Ah Fong, stung by old Foo's thrust. "But listen—I came to discuss matters of greater moment. Have you heard aught of Louie Chang?"

"I have not," replied Foo, looking up quickly.

Ah Fong moved nearer to Foo's desk, and lowered his voice.

"As you know, Louie Chang and I are sharp competitors in the secret business of selling the forbidden white drug. He has often threatened to do away with me by whispering into the ears of the foreign devil officials. I have often thought of doing the same to him; but Chang holds the tiger's paw over me. I know not where he keeps his secret supply of the drug, while he knows that I keep mine hidden in my home, for that is the only place I have. I can do nothing to Chang, therefore, because I can give the officials no definite information; but Chang could make me much trouble. He will undoubtedly do so as soon as he learns that you have betrothed your daughter to me."

Foo Chan Wo nodded, but kept silence.

"So," went on Ah Fong, with unpleasant emphasis, "I am going to bring my supply here and conceal it in your store until some time after the wedding.

That will fool both Louie Chang and the officials. You do not object, of course?"

Old Foo Chan Wo frowned heavily.

"You know very well, Ah Fong, how I feel about that disgraceful business. Haven't you many times tried to entangle me in the forbidden traffic? *Aih,* I am poor, else I would never have betrothed my *Thousand of Gold* to you; but, by *The Seven-faced god,* I am not going to dishonour my family name!"

"I was thinking," Ah Fong continued coolly, "that perhaps you would accommodate me when you reflected how considerate I have been regarding the sum owing me for so long——"

"Isn't it enough that you have taken my daughter? Must I also put my honour into——"

"And after deducting the sum agreed upon as the marriage price," proceeded Ah Fong, with chilling precision, "there is still quite a sum due me, which——"

"Which I cannot pay now, but will some time."

"Of course, you have the store——"

Foo Chan Wo drew away from the younger man as if he had been struck a sharp blow in the face.

Ah Fong's slant eyes narrowed. He showed his teeth in a malevolent grin.

"To-night," he whispered. "To-night, at the second hour after midnight, I will bring it here, and you shall be ready. *Ho hang la!*"

The old curio-dealer made no response. For a long time he sat at the desk, his great shoulders hunched, his head bowed, his lips puffing furiously on his long-stemmed pipe.

III

Moving silently on his padded slippers, Louie Chang selected a stool of old ebony inlaid with mother-of-pearl, and sat down by Foo Chan Wo's desk. With deft fingers he fitted a cigarette in his carved ivory holder, and over the flaming match his bronze eyes surveyed old Foo covertly.

"So, honourable Foo," he said in silken tones, "your daughter is betrothed to Ah Fong, and I can eat salt, eh?"

"It could not be helped, Louie Chang," said Foo apologetically. "I have long been indebted to Ah Fong and could pay in no other way; so now it is settled."

"Settled?" Chang widened his black eyes with sinister emphasis.

Foo Chan Wo, trembling inwardly, ventured a nod.

Chang took a deep inhalation. Then, the smoke billowing from his mouth and nostrils, he spoke in tones that carried a thinly veiled threat.

"I am surprised that you and Ah Fong dared to do it. Ah Fong is a jackal and a coward. He knows I have been seeking an excuse to——" Chang paused, then drew a long-nailed forefinger across his bare throat in a swift and violent gesture.

Foo Chan Wo shuddered. Watching the other warily, he laid aside his bamboo pipe and, from the rack, selected one of heavy argentan.

Chang saw the move. For an instant an amused gleam shone in his bronze eyes; then, slowly, the lids

drew down like curtains. "How is business?" he asked, abruptly.

"Very poor," complained Foo, not relaxing his vigilance. "The *tong* war has kept many foreign devils away. Those who come to my store ask many questions, but make few purchases."

"Old man," cut in Chang sharply, "I was referring to your business in the white drug."

"*Aih-yah!* I do not handle it! I—I am too old and slow-witted to engage in such a dangerous enterprise."

Thoughtfully, Louie Chang lit another cigarette.

"I am sorry," he said, studying the old man's face. "An expected shipment has failed to arrive, and I am entirely out. I have orders to fill. I am prepared to pay extra for as much as you or Ah Fong can furnish, up to twenty ounces."

"I do not keep it, Louie Chang. I do not keep it. I know nothing of Ah Fong's business. I swear by *The Three Pure Ones!*" Foo Chan Wo looked into the other's cruel eyes and spoke with meaning emphasis. "Should the foreign devil officials search my place, they would not find so much as a grain of the forbidden drug."

With his right hand Chang held his cigarette to one side. With the long nail of his left forefinger he struck the ash, and watched it fall into a brazen censer bowl that stood on the floor.

"Well," he concluded, after a silence, "since you do not care to accommodate me, I shall be on my way. *Ho hang la!*"

"I do not keep it," repeated Foo. "I swear I——"

But Louie Chang, moving silently on his padded slippers, had walked his way.

For as long as it takes to cook rice properly, the old curio-dealer sat huddled in his chair, too stunned even to think of his pipe. He was aroused presently by Foo San, who had come down to mind the store while her father went up to his mid-day rice.

"It is written," muttered Foo Chan Wo miserably, as he climbed the creaking stairs, "that a bamboo hedge seen at a distance appears impregnable; but standing before it, one may often discover a way of escape. *Aih,* may *The Eye of Heaven* help me find a way."

IV

Little Foo San picked up a small statue of Buddha, and, holding it up to the light, scrutinised it carefully for flaws. It was a remarkable piece of wood-carving —a month's task for one of the fastest Cantonese workmen. The figure was of white Ningpo wood set on a base of polished black teak. Finding it perfect, Foo San placed it on the shelf by a similar statue, and, on her list, checked off *The Buddha Twins.*

"Yes, Frank," said the girl, with a little catch in her voice, "everything you say is true; but what can we do about it? My father is deeply indebted to Ah Fong, and could save his business in no other way."

Frank Wing frowned. He was a young man, clad in well-tailored American clothes. His face was that of the student and philosopher.

"As for the price"—he spoke with superb repres-

sion—"I do not wish to buy a wife. This is not China. However, had we known that your father proposed betrothing you to Ah Fong, my father, to prevent it, would have paid any reasonable sum."

Foo San shook her sleek head so emphatically that she set her jade pendants tinkling.

"That would have done no good. My father was beset by Ah Fong on one side and by Louie Chang on the other. He greatly fears both of them, and marrying me to Ah Fong will help pull the dragon's teeth. It is only the thought of helping my father that prevents me from slaying myself; for surely I would rather die than marry Ah Fong!"

The young man, a stricken look in his eyes, held silent.

"Frank," said the girl suddenly, leaning across the counter and lowering her voice, "why don't you tell the officials about Ah Fong's unlawful dealings in morphine? I know it is a very disgraceful thing to run with tales to the foreign devils, but if Ah Fong were to be taken to prison, I would not have to marry him!"

Frank Wing looked up quickly. Before he could speak, they were warned by the creaking stairs that old Foo Chan Wo had finished his mid-day rice and was returning to the store. With a whispered adieu to the girl, Wing turned quickly and walked his way.

"*Ho hang la!*" whispered Foo San. "I hope you have a safe walk!"

"Daughter," rumbled Foo Chan Wo, "who was that man?"

Foo San trembled; then, lifting her head she spoke politely.

"That was the eldest son of Wing, the dealer in silks."

Foo Chan Wo started. For about the time it takes one to name *The Five Relations,* he looked at the girl without a word. When at length he spoke, his voice was stern, but his eyes were gentle.

"He comes here quite often, does he not?"

"Yes, honourable father."

Foo grunted into the long stem of his pipe, and again was silent for a space.

"He is welcome here?"

Foo San bowed her pretty head.

Another grunt into the long-stemmed pipe. Then Foo spoke softly to himself.

"And Kung Fu Tse said: 'Where love is, yield not to an army!' *Aih,* this is a crosswoven net! She loves the gifted son of my friend Wing, the dealer in silks. I have betrothed her to Ah Fong, whom we both despise. Ah Fong thinks to save his own throat by hiding his forbidden drug in my store. Louie Chang seeks revenge by setting the foreign devil officials upon me. *Aih-yah,* surely I am beset by beasts!"

"What is that you said, father?" inquired Foo San.

"I said, daughter, get back to your work. You have chattered enough for one day. Do not again disturb my peaceful meditations."

Obediently Foo San returned to her task of checking the latest shipment of curios. Foo Chan Wo took

up his pipe, and for a long time sat with half-closed eyes, puffing idly.

Presently the old curio-dealer looked up. There was an eager note in his voice.

"In that lot, Foo San, you have found *The Buddha Twins?* Bring them to me."

Foo San took the two statues from the shelf and set them on the desk before her father. Foo Chan Wo looked at them for a moment; then, nodding his head many times, he arose and put on his street cap.

He turned to Foo San. She had been crying.

"My *Thousand of Gold,*" said the old man kindly, "let me not see the waters of sorrow dimming your eyes. When a bitter cup is given you to drink, then drink it; but grieve not over what may never be. Mind the store now until I return."

When Foo Chan Wo returned, he took *The Buddha Twins* from his desk and went upstairs to a room where he would not be disturbed. There he took a small package from beneath his blouse, unwrapped it, and disclosed a quantity of some white flaky substance.

"It is written," mused Foo Chan Wo, "that on a certain day Len Chen Len, being attacked by two wild beasts, so manœuvred things that he set them against each other, and so escaped, while they tore each other's throats. Len Chen Len was a wise man!"

So speaking, Foo picked up one of the Twins and held it upside down. Pressing with one finger on the god's protruding navel, he pushed with his thumb against the teakwood base. Instantly the base flew

up, like a lid, disclosing a hollow space inside the statue.

Into this hollow space Foo quickly crammed about half of the white drug, then snapped the spring base shut again. He proceeded to conceal the remainder of the morphine in the other statue.

A half-hour later, Foo Chan Wo dispatched one of the statues to Ah Fong. With it was a note of congratulation, signed "Louie Chang."

At the same time the other Twin was dispatched by trusted messenger to Louie Chang. With it was a politely worded note of condolence, signed "Ah Fong."

"It is written," Foo Chan Wo rumbled into his long-stemmed pipe, "that *The Buddha Twins* are emblems of good fortune to the one possessing both; but whosoever possesses one without the other, walks within the shadow of death. By *The Seven-faced god,* let it be so. *Tsau kom lok!*"

V

That evening, Government officers, acting on information furnished by an Americanised Chinese who declined to give his name, raided the home of Ah Fong. During the search, one of the raiders picked up an odd-looking statue and chanced to see, lodged between the teakwood base and the Buddha's feet, a small speck of white powder. The officer touched the powder with the tip of his tongue, then called the agent in charge.

"Morphine, chief," he said. "I'll bet the old god is full of it!"

"Open it up, Ah Fong," the chief curtly ordered.

"No savvy," growled the morphine-dealer.

The chief swung a raiding hatchet. Ah Fong was arrested and charged with violation of the Harrison Act.

As soon as the wagon had left with Ah Fong, the agents closed down on the cigar store of Louie Chang. Here, during an otherwise unsuccessful search, they discovered a statue of Buddha identical with the one found at Ah Fong's place.

"Open it up, Louie," the chief ordered.

"I don't know anything about that," returned Louie Chang in his usual silky tones.

Again the chief swung a raiding hatchet. Louie Chang was promptly arrested and charged with violation of the Federal drug laws.

The next morning, after the Commissioner's hearing, both Ah Fong and Louie Chang were released on bail furnished by a professional bond broker.

The two drug vendors met, shortly after, by a stairway near Chan's store. Neither spoke; but two explosions blended into a single dull roar that rumbled and echoed in the narrow alley.

Ah Fong was dead with a bullet through his heart when the police reached him. Louie Chang breathed his last on the way to the Emergency Hospital.

. . . . . .

With much facial contortion, Foo Chan Wo put the finishing touches on the crimson strip of paper that lay before him on his desk. Then, with as much haste as his great weight permitted, he went out to

the front of his store. On a panel between one window and the door he pasted the announcement that his daughter, Foo San, was that day betrothed to the eldest son of Wing, the dealer in silks.

"I am very sorry," he chuckled to himself, as he returned to his desk. "Yes, it is too bad. However, I shall eat much better now."

Foo San, singing as she went about her work, presently drew near her father's desk.

"Honourable father," she said, her eyes bright as jewels, "I have searched everywhere, but I cannot find *The Buddha Twins* I gave you the other day. Did you misplace them?"

"By *The Seven-faced god!*" Foo Chan Wo roared in great glee. "Daughter, I think I placed them—most successfully!"

THE FILIAL PIETY OF WONG KEE LIM

I

"Haie!" exclaimed my good friend Lee Bow T'sin, widening his long, slant eyes; "you Americans know nothing of filial piety. You build palaces for your young, and send your old to the poorhouse."

I bowed my head. To cover my embarrassment I refilled our bowls with the steaming Piang-cha. He is a very strange man, this Chinese friend of mine; and I did not know what to say. Sometimes when I hear only his words, spoken in the curt English he acquired at Harvard, I feel that there is a common bond between us; but when he changes to the tuneful cadences of the Cantonese, and I look up from my bowl and see his dark face and the long, slant eyes, eyes as expressionless at times as black stones, then Lee Bow T'sin seems to me like a stranger whom I can never know.

"I realise that the Chinese put filial piety at the head of all virtues," I said finally. "It is the basis of your family life, the mainspring of your religion, the very foundation of your Government. Still, don't you think that much of this Chinese filial love is mostly talk and form? Now, I have read that famous Chinese classic *The Twenty-four Patterns of Filial Piety*. I thought it very silly."

Mr. Lee waved a slender brown hand in a gesture of dismissal.

"Written for Chinese youths centuries ago! Of course you did not understand that it is entirely symbolical. But right here in the Chinese quarter of San Francisco there have been many instances of the loyalty of our young people to their parents and their family name. There was, for example," and Lee Bow T'sin nodded thoughtfully, "the remarkable case of Kee Lim, of the family of Wong."

I kept silent. I wanted to hear the story of Wong Kee Lim; but many years in the Government service among the Chinese had taught me not to appear curious about anything I desired to learn from a wily son of T'ong. So presently, Lee Bow T'sin took a cigarette, lighted it with a graceful flourish, then told me this strange tale of the filial piety of Wong Kee Lim.

II

Wong Doo smacked his lips over the last bite of *cha sui dun* and moved ponderously to the rattan rocker that stood by his pipe rack. Wong was an old man and his stomach was big with wisdom and much eating; and as he eased himself into the rocker one could hardly distinguish between the squeaky grunting of the old man and the creaking protesting of the old chair.

Having served her honourable husband, the wife of Wong prepared more eggs with broiled ham, and sat down to second rice. The son, Kee Lim, a slender, dark-eyed youth of studious habits, stood by the

window waiting politely for his venerable father to speak.

"My son," Wong rumbled musically when he had smoked his three pipes, "to-day the wheel of your life turns twenty. As you very well know, it is your duty now to marry and have sons that our honourable family name may be preserved, and that our ancestors may be properly worshipped. Is it not so?"

"Yes—yes—honourable father," Kee Lim replied, hesitantly.

Wong refilled his pipe. For about the time then that it takes one to write down *The Five Relations* and *The Five Cardinal Virtues,* there was silence save the guttural bubbling of the water-pipe, and the spluttering of the old man's lips as he blew the ashes from the tiny bowl.

"Wives," said Wong at length, "are a nuisance, as you will learn. They are always talking or eating; and quite often they succeed in doing both at the same time. To keep a wife in peace one must have much patience and many provisions. Now, a poet may have patience; but how is he to feed his wife? She cannot eat his verses."

"That is true, sir," admitted Kee Lim; "and that is why I do not wish to marry now. I want to go to *The University Across the Bay* and become a great scholar. Then I shall go to China and be a teacher. I shall take my part in the upbuilding of the new China."

Wong clicked his tongue angrily.

"What nonsense! What a wicked waste of time!

Didn't your Chinese tutor instruct you in the *Trimetrical Classics?* Haven't you read the *San Tze Ching* and the *Chou Pei;* and can't you do sums on the abacus? Certainly! Then that is sufficient. Tomorrow you shall go to work in Pow Lung's butcher's shop. After a time you can buy an interest in the business; but you shall begin as I began—by scraping hogs."

Kee Lim's dark eyes widened and lost their dreamy look. His slender hands picked nervously at the embroidery on the front of his blouse.

"Well!" crackled old Wong. "I have spoken!"

"Yes, honourable father, but——"

"Haie! You are becoming more impudent every day! I am sorry I ever permitted you to attend that foreign devil school. Their foolish books have made you stubborn and unfilial and perverse."

"But, sir," ventured Kee Lim politely, "while I know it is my duty to obey you in all things, I don't wish to marry. Neither do I wish to be a scraper of filthy swine. I—I long to be a scholar."

Wong struggled to his feet. He shook his fist with rage. "You shall do as I say! No son of mine shall waste his time with books and small-talk. I have fed you; but, by *The Seven-faced god,* I will not feed your wife. Out of my sight, worthless scribbler of worthless verses!"

Kee Lim, knowing well his father's terrible anger, turned at once to leave. Enraged as much by the boy's prompt obedience as by what little he had ventured to say, Wong snatched a heavy argentan pipe

from the rack, and struck the young man over the shoulders. With a sharp cry of pain, Lee Kim sprang aside. He turned to face the enraged man, at the same time reaching for the door knob.

Again Wong raised the pipe and swung it at Kee Lim; but the youth jumped quickly out of the way. The force of the blow threw Wong off his balance. He stumbled forward and crashed into the door. The pipe fell from his hand. Kee Lim picked it up.

With a bellow of fury, the old man snatched up a heavy teak-wood stool. He swung it over his head. Kee Lim was now in a corner. His father stood between him and the door. "Father!" he cried, backing away; "father, don't kill me!"

The old man came on, murder glaring in his eyes. Kee Lim had seen him like this before; and he knew his life was in peril. He raised the argentan pipe.

"Father, if you come nearer I will strike!"

Wong crowded forward, and struck with the heavy stool. Kee Lim, beside himself with fear, swung the pipe at the old man's arm, hoping to make him drop the stool. The pipe glanced off Wong's arm and caught him on the forehead. Kee Lim heard the wicked *swish* of the heavy stool as it grazed his head. He saw his father put his hands to his forehead, saw him rise slowly to his full height, turn half around, then pitch forward and crash to the floor.

Two plain-clothes officers of the Chinatown squad, attracted by the sound of fighting, rushed into the place. They saw Wong Doo on the floor, his face black, his eyes closed. Kee Lim, still clutching the

heavy pipe in his hands, was bending over his father. The wife of Wong crouched by the table, babbling hysterically in Cantonese.

A half-hour later, the body of old Wong was taken to the morgue. The poet, Wong Kee Lim, was arrested and charged with murder.

III

Juu Shuck, climbing the littered stairs that led to his home, was in a surly mood; for he had lingered long in the rear room of the *Happy Life Cigar Store,* and he had played long and unluckily at *fan tan.* When he thought of his mother, who, he knew, had kept a platter of hot *chow yuk se min* waiting for him, his shame made him feel resentful; and when he thought of his father, who, he knew, would be by the charcoal fire, grumbling over his long bamboo pipe, his head became hot with anger. There would be the same wrangling again. His father would scold; not because of the gambling, for anyone knows that is not wrong; but because of the son's idleness, which everyone knows is a very great sin. He would give the old man sharp answers over his shoulder as he devoured the noodles with pork, onions, and mushrooms; then he would put on his cap again and walk his way.

Opening the door quietly, Juu Shuck stepped in, hung up his cap and, without looking toward his father's chair, started for the table. He took one step, then halted. A startled cry broke from his lips. There, on the floor, his arms outflung, his face shrunken and

ghastly in the half-light, lay his father. Above the breast of the old man's crimsoned jacket showed the corded hilt of a long Chinese knife.

For about the time then that it takes one to sip a bowl of fiery *ng ka py,* the young man crouched over his dead father, his mouth and eyes wide, his long-nailed fingers outspread like the ribs of a Swatow fan. Presently he realised that his mother was not in the room.

Juu Shuck padded swiftly across the floor to the door of the bedroom, and flung it open. His mother was not there. He ran then to a closet door by the charcoal stove; and there he found the woman, hiding in a dark corner, too frightened to speak. He caught her by the arm and dragged her out into the room. "*Aih-yah!*" he cried. "See what has happened! Who did that? Who killed my father?"

Finally, in broken sentences, the woman told what she knew of the affair. They were at evening rice when Gar Dick Ben, the gambler, came to collect money the boy, Juu Shuck, owed him. The old man had declared again that he would not pay Shuck's gambling debts unless he went to work; and he had ordered the gambler out of the house. Whereupon Gar Dick Ben had spoken of the son, the father, and all their male ancestors in language highly insulting. The woman saw old Juu reach for the revolver he kept beneath the grass-seed pillow at the head of his bunk. She saw the gambler draw his long knife. Terrified, she had crawled into the closet and shut the door.

After the funeral services, when old Juu had been

laid in a lacquered coffin to await shipment to Canton, Juu Shuck and his mother returned sorrowfully to their home; and while the widow burned devil papers and muttered tearful prayers before the family ancestral tablets, the son sat by the window and cursed the man who had slain his father.

"He is a cowardly jackal!" cried Juu Shuck fiercely; *"and may his wicked arm be hacked off with dull knives!"*

Then came old Juu Ah Toy, principal elder of the family of Juu, to drink *Sorrowful Autumn* tea with the widow, and to smoke many pipes of strong tobacco with the son. When he had spoken all the flowery phrases prescribed for such occasions by *The August Book of Ceremonial Rites,* and when they had talked about many other things in which none of them were interested, the elder put his long bamboo pipe aside and turned to the son of Juu.

"Filial piety, my son, is the root of all moral principles. The *Ta Hsueh,* which teaches good government, is wise; the *Chung Yung,* which teaches virtue, is sublime; but the *Hsia'o Ching,* which teaches filial piety—that is the most loved book of all China!"

"Yes, venerable Juu, that is so," agreed Juu Shuck, nodding his head many times.

"Recite for me, then, the whole duty of a filial son!"

"To serve his parents with all courtesy whilst they live, to bury them with all courtesy when they die, and to worship them with all courtesy. So says Kung Fu Tse."

"That is quite correct. Now! It is a long journey the bones of your father must make to the burial ground in our home land. That the journey may be a safe one, you have doubtless attended to the prescribed ceremonials. There remains but one thing."

Juu Shuck's eyes narrowed. He nodded slowly.

"Even if the journey should be made with no misfortune, and should the bones of your father be interred in a place selected by competent astrologers, there would still remain the one thing necessary to ensure our honourable family a propitious *fung shui*."

"*Hi low!*" agreed Juu Shuck quickly; "that is true. Anyone knows that only misfortune can befall us so long as the murder of my venerable father goes unavenged. *Haie!* We may as well bury him in a damp place where the winds and waters are unfavourable, as to bury him before I deal with his murderer."

The elder, with hearty approval, nodded his head many times. Then, presently, he sharpened his eyes and looked up. "You could make complaint to the white foreign devil police," he ventured, watching the young man's face. "They are asking many questions."

Juu Shuck scowled. "Surely, Talented One of the Family of Juu, you do not mean I should do such a stupid thing. Everyone knows that the white foreign devils have many laws but little justice. Have we not learned that many times?"

"True, true!" cried the elder; "but some of the younger generation preach that we should take all com-

plaints to the foreign officials. I am glad to learn that you are a filial son of your father."

Then the elder put on his slippers, and stood up. Rising to his full height, he stared at the family scroll on the wall above Juu Shuck's head. Like a priest in the *Mother of Heaven Temple,* he chanted in Cantonese:

"A double edge to your blade, my son; a double strength to your good right arm!"

When the elder had walked his way, Juu Shuck sat for a time in silent meditation. Then he arose, took a stick of burning punk from the brazen incense bowl, and knelt before the ancestral tablets. Holding the punk between his palms, the burning end down, the son of Juu lifted his face and cried in the weird singsong of the Cantonese:

"*K'u kwo shan lok!* He is dead! So will I slay the unspeakable one who caused my father's spirit to ascend the dragon. By *The Three Precious Ones,* I will have blood for blood that my father's murder may be avenged, that my ancestors may rest in abiding peace, and that the *fung shui* of our honourable family may be always propitious!" Then, fiercely, he crushed the smouldering punk on the floor.

That night Juu Shuck waited in a darkened doorway in the narrow *Alley of Lingering Shadows.* When Gar Dick Ben came from the gambling-house, the son of Juu sprang upon him. The long Chinese knife rose—and fell.

Two plain-clothes officers of the Chinatown squad, seeking evidence against the gambling-house, heard a

cry, and ran to the scene. They found Gar Dick Ben lying on the pavement, a corded hilt protruding from the breast of his jacket. After a chase they caught Juu Shuck. He was arrested and charged with murder.

IV

"Haie!" exclaimed my good friend Lee Bow T'sin, widening his long, slant eyes; "you Americans know even less of justice than you do of filial piety. Everybody knew that Wong Kee Lim, the poet, had slain his father and should be beheaded at once; but your stupid magistrates hired doctors and proved that death had been caused, not by being struck with the pipe, but by a disease of the heart that Wong had had many years. So, although Wong Kee Lim admitted the guilt, he was set free."

I refilled our bowl with the fragrant Tiang-cha, and remained silent.

"Also," went on Mr. Lee, "everybody knew that Juu Shuck had done his filial duty in avenging his father's slaying; yet your magistrates charged him with murder and wanted him to be hung. Instead, Juu Shuck became prosperous, married and had sons, and acquired all the blessings that come to those who have performed their filial duty."

"How can that be?" I spoke up quickly. "Couldn't the police convict Juu Shuck of killing the gambler?"

Lee Bow T'sin made a queer noise with his tongue; and when I looked up from my tea bowl and saw his dark face and the long, slant eyes, eyes as expression-

less as black marbles, he seemed to me then like a stranger whom I can neither know nor understand.

"Oh, yes, they could have convicted Juu Shuck; but there we come to the filial piety of Wong Kee Lim. He had been led astray by your American books; but in his heart he was a filial son of Wong. When he found that he could not put his mind to his studies, he knew something was wrong. When a strange disease afflicted his mother, when thieves broke into their house and stole most of the money old Wong had left them, and when all of the Wong clan averted their faces when Kee Lim passed down Dupont Street, then he knew what was wrong. He knew he was guilty of slaying his father and should be punished. He knew also that Juu Shuck had done only his filial duty and should be saved.

"So Kee Lim went to the foreign devil police and told them he had killed Gar Dick Ben, and was hiding in a doorway when they arrested Juu Shuck. Whereupon Kee Lim's mother recovered her health, the stolen money was found, and the clan of Wong saved its face."

"But Kee Lim?" I pursued; "Kee Lim, the poet? What became of him?"

"Him?" echoed my Chinese friend, dropping into English. "Oh, they hung him at San Quentin years ago!"

THE STRANGE SLAYING OF BOCK GEE

I DO not know how long I had sat there listening to the queer tale that my friend Chen Wan recited to me in his quiet, charming Cantonese. I know only that I became suddenly aware that he had ceased speaking, that my forgotten pipe was rank with cold ashes. On the wall at the back of Chen Wan I saw the coloured paper lanterns stir gently in the evening breeze. I became conscious of the odour of incense mingled with the heavy fragrance of Oriental flowers. From the walk below, one of the narrow, twisting alleys in San Francisco's Chinatown, came the stealthy drag of Chinese slippers, the muffled sound of voices in harsh, guttural undertones. Opposite me, his arms resting on the ebony table, sat Chen Wan, his head bowed, his face in shadow.

I rapped the dottle from my pipe, refilled it, and struck a match. At that, as though the sound had startled him from reverie, Chen raised his head.

"Well, Minturn," he said, dropping into his crisp, precise English, "what do you think of it? If you were in my place, what would you do?"

"Hanged if I know, Chen!" I replied truthfully. "It's a devilish queer situation. It doesn't sound real."

"Ah, but it is! See here!" From a drawer in the table, Chen took something wrapped in a yellow silk

handkerchief, and laid it down before my eyes. I saw the soft glimmer of steel, and made out, presently, a long Chinese knife with straight blade, a corded handle, and a guard shaped like a drawn-out letter S.

"This," spoke Chen quietly, "is the knife of *The Celestial Brotherhood;* the knife with which I am to slay Bock Gee, a man whom I know only by sight; a man who, so far as I have ever learned, has never done me harm."

I was too amazed for speech. Chen Wan and I had been intimate friends for many years. I had met him first in China when I was there years ago as a secret agent of the Treasury Department. Then when I went to the University of California to specialise in Oriental languages, I found Chen there, and our friendship grew. He was a quiet sort, eager to learn, and almost worshipful in his admiration of America and American ideals and institutions. In those days I found it very easy to think of Chen Wan as a friend, very difficult to remember that he was of the mysterious Orient.

I had not heard from him for some time when, on this evening, I received an urgent summons to call at his rooms on Canton Street. He was in trouble, he wrote me, and felt that he must talk with someone. "I think you will understand better than anyone I know," the note finished; "so please come. You will find the stair door unlocked."

Of course, I went. And of course, Chen Wan, steeped in four thousand years of Chinese ceremony, kept me waiting while we ate a most delicious dish

composed of young duck cooked with pineapple, and sipped innumerable bowls of steaming *Water Fairy* tea, and talked about everything under the sun save that which I had come to hear.

Then, finally, Chen Wan had sent the dishes away, lighted a cigarette, and told me in his quiet, charming Cantonese, that strange tale of *The Celestial Brotherhood* and of the knife with the corded hilt.

The name of the society, when Chen had spoken it the third time, stirred memories of something I had read years before in a queer old tome in the library at Canton. It seems that something less than twenty-five hundred years ago, when Confucius and his disciples were stirring the Chinese nation just as the Man of Nazareth, five hundred years later, shook the foundations of the Jewish government, a number of jealous Chinese priests formed a secret society and called themselves *The Celestial Brotherhood.*

Just what was the object of this organisation, I do not know, and probably shall never learn; but undoubtedly it had undergone many changes between the time those old Oriental priests banded together in far off Cathay, and the night, twenty-five centuries later, that I sat on Chen Wan's balcony here in San Francisco and listened to his strange story.

More than that, I learned only what Chen Wan thought wise to tell me. I learned that membership was by birth, being handed down from father to son. When his father died, Chen Wan, at the age of fourteen, had been taken into the society, and had sworn by *The Oath of the Bloody Wine* to uphold the prin-

ciples of *The Celestial Brotherhood* and obey its mandates for ever.

"Chen, that was all right so long as you were in China," I said; "but when you came to America and became Americanised, you should have renounced this dangerous organisation."

"Easily said!" Chen smiled, and made a graceful gesture with his slender hands. "When I came to America I knew only the few words of English I had learned at the Mission. This was a strange land with strange customs. When I found here in San Francisco a branch of the *Brotherhood,* I was glad to accept the advantages my membership gave me. Besides, you must not forget that I remain in America only by grace of being a student. I was born in China. Some day, I must go back."

I sat up. There was something in Chen's tone that told me more than his words; and for a moment I had a queer feeling of mingled amusement and pity. For I saw now that Chen, for all his college education, with all his admiration of progressive American ways, was in the grip of Chinese superstition. He stood in fear of this ancient organisation.

"Chen, don't be a fool!" I spoke up. "This is America. However just it may seem to the Chinese mind for you to run this ugly knife through Bock Gee, in this country it's plain murder. You can't do it. Don't be afraid of this tom-fool society. Why, man, you're within hailing distance of a dozen American policemen! Tell *The Celestial Brotherhood* to go to the devil!"

Chen Wan shook his head slowly.

"I can't do it, Minturn; I can't do it!"

I regarded him a moment in silence. His fatalism, his calm resignation to what he considered the inevitable, gave me a miserable feeling of depression.

"Who's this Bock Gee, anyway?" I inquired, mainly to gain time. "What's he done that he should be killed?"

"Have you forgotten already that I told you all that?" smiled Chen. "Bock Gee is a member of the order. He has persistently violated his oath; how, I cannot tell you. They have voted his death. It is not often that anything like this is done. Names were drawn. Mine is the honour"—Chen bowed his head with fine irony—"of being the society's executioner."

"Supposing the police catch you?"

"Better that than violate my oath of obedience," countered Chen.

I smoked a moment.

"Why not skip the country, Chen?"

He shook his head. "Absolutely useless. I might escape for awhile. But sooner or later, the agents of *The Brotherhood* would track me down. And all that time I should be living in the shadow of their vengeance. No, there is no escape!"

"Why, you poor fool!" I said, and I tried to make my tone sting, "I thought you had acquired some sound American sense. You're acting like a half-witted heathen. Come, Chen! Let's see if we can't reason some way out of this mess! This Celestial outfit has

pronounced the death sentence on Bock Gee. You have been selected to do their dirty work. I suppose they gave you a certain time limit. When is the time up?"

Chen answered with unruffled temper.

"I was given one week in which either to slay Bock Gee or incur the punishment for disobedience. The week will be up"—he looked at his watch—"in exactly twenty minutes."

"The devil you say!" I became suddenly alarmed. "Why didn't you send for me before this?"

"Because I was not quite sure of my course. Besides, you could not have helped me. No one—nothing can help me. But now that I have made my decision, I wanted to tell you because—afterward—I wanted you to understand."

"For heaven's sake, Chen, what are you talking about? What——"

"Simply this," Chen broke in quietly. "I have decided to take the easiest way out. I shall not kill Bock Gee. I cannot do that. Neither shall I face the wrath of *The Celestial Brotherhood*. There is a way—an easy way. I——"

He slurred the word, and fell silent. I saw his right hand drop casually over the corded hilt of the Chinese knife.

I could not keep down a cold shudder. In the face of this black fatalism, I felt absolutely helpless. Here was a young man of splendid intelligence, finely educated, a tribute to twentieth-century progress; and out of the dead centuries had come a ruthless hand to

drag him back to the slough of Oriental superstition —and cold-blooded murder or suicide. It was horrible.

Before I could find my tongue, there came an interruption. The servant of Chen, he who had waited on us while we ate, glided softly out of the shadowy hallway, approached his master's side, and bowed.

"Pardon my disrespect," he said in Cantonese; "but, master, there is a visitor at your door who will not leave. He——"

"Tell him I can see no one," interrupted Chen, sharply.

"I have told him that many times, sir; but he will not walk his way."

"His name?"

"He refuses to give it."

"Do you know him?"

"He keeps his face in shadows."

"Well, then——"

"Sir, to please the fellow I finally agreed to bring you this writing." He laid a folded paper on the table.

I saw Chen Wan stare at it, wide-eyed, as though he had already guessed the message yet feared to read it. Then I saw his trembling hands unfold the rice tissue and hold it to the light. Slowly, he laid it down again.

"You may show him in," said Chen Wan calmly.

The instant the servant had left, Chen bent forward, and whispered:

"Minturn, it's one of *The Brotherhood*. Probably come to remind me that the time is about up. Hide

you behind that screen—and listen. Then, by *The Three Pure Ones,* you'll understand——"

"No," I objected. "Let's face——"

"Go quickly!" begged Chen. "Please! for my sake!"

From down the hallway came the sound of shuffling slippers. I arose and stepped quietly behind the stand screen, a huge affair figured with a stork, a pine tree, and a tortoise—all emblems of a long and happy life—done in threads of gold and purple on a background of black silk.

I stood there, waiting and listening; and I remember how it all seemed very strange and unreal. Below me, in the alley, I could see shadowy forms pass beneath the dim rays of the street lamp, then vanish. Half a block away was a pool room facing the main street; I could hear voices, and the sharp click of rolling balls.

Then Chen Wan was speaking.

"Hoo la ma!" he said. "How do you do!"

"Good evening!" returned a voice in cautious Cantonese. "Are we alone?"

"Is one ever alone?" parried Chen. "Does not *The Eye of Heaven* see all human actions? Well, speak freely, sir! Who are you? What is your business with me? And why do you mask your face like a thief?"

"Patience, Son of Chen! By *The Nine Heavens,* you shall hear enough; I—I am one of *The Celestial Brotherhood.*"

"So you informed me in your note. You come, I

suppose, to tell me that the time is almost up. Why remind me of something I cannot forget?"

I saw the masked man take a step nearer Chen Wan. He spoke with slow emphasis.

"On the contrary, Chen Wan, I come to tell you that if you will place the knife of *The Brotherhood* in my hands, I, myself, will go forth and slay Bock Gee for you."

There was a long silence.

"*Ts'ing tso!*" spoke Chen Wan finally. "Please sit down. Now let me hear you say that again. You will kill Bock Gee for me. Why?"

Through the narrow opening, where the screen hinged, I saw the masked man seat himself on the stool I had just left. He looked at Chen Wan. Between them, on the table, I could see the glitter of a long blade.

"I am happy to tell you that, Son of Chen," the caller replied. "Bock Gee has many times broken the precepts of *The Brotherhood* because he was greedy for profit; but there is one oath that none of us ever violate."

"Yes?" encouraged Chen Wan.

The masked man raised both hands.

"And this shall be my creed," he quoted dramatically; "*Never forget a friend; never forgive an enemy!*"

"I remember that," spoke Chen. "Well, then, I suppose this Bock Gee is an enemy of yours."

"No, Son of Chen, he is not. But your father—was my friend."

I saw Chen Wan lean back on his stool. He got out his case and, with his usual deliberation, selected a cigarette, and lighted it. For a moment he smoked thoughtfully.

"I begin to understand," he said at length. "My father ascended the dragon many years ago in China. It appears that whilst he lived he did you some favour. Now you propose to repay the debt by slaying Bock Gee for me. This is very strange. Has Bock Gee ever done you any harm?"

"None whatever. But what has that to do with the matter? *The Brotherhood* has voted his death. Some time, someone, for *The Brotherhood,* will slay him."

"I suppose that is true," admitted Chen Wan slowly.

"Certainly. But must a rat-trap be made of silk? You are a young man with much to lose. You have learning. You should be prosperous and happy. Should you slay Bock Gee, the foreign devil police might send you to prison for life. On the other hand, I am an old man. I have little to live for. Therefore, I shall slay Bock Gee. In that way will my debt to your family be paid. And yet *The Brotherhood* will think it was your hand that guided the blade through Bock Gee's heart."

"I understand," said Chen Wan. "I'm very grateful to you, friend; and very sorry. But it cannot be. This is America; and in America taking a man's life is murder. I cannot let you do it."

"*Ts! Ts!* That is foolish talk, Son of Chen! The white foreign devils have many stupid laws. Anyone

knows that according to Chinese law the sentence of death pronounced upon Bock Gee is just. Isn't that true?"

"*Hi low;* that is true. But——"

"And no one knows it better than Bock Gee himself."

"Yes; but I cannot forget that this is America."

"Nor can I forget that we are Chinese," retorted the other. "It is very simple. With one swift blow I shall slay Bock Gee, save your face with *The Brotherhood,* and pay my debt to your family. But I must have the knife of *The Brotherhood.* You know the reason for that. The knife is an emblem of *Brotherhood* justice. It will not do to slay Bock Gee by any other means. So I have come—ah!"

His voice rose, then slurred quickly into silence. I saw his hands pounce on the knife that lay on the table before him. Apparently the mask had prevented him seeing it before. Now, with the knife in hand, he started to rise.

"Sit down!" spoke Chen Wan sharply. "You must not do this thing. I shall deal with *The Brotherhood* myself." He looked at his watch. "In five minutes——"

"Five minutes! Then——"

"Sit down! In five minutes one of *The Brotherhood* will be here. I shall be waiting for him. When he sees me, he will know at once that I was brave enough to defy their order, yet too cowardly to face their anger."

"Fool!" cried the masked man, drawing away. "Slaying yourself will not save Bock Gee."

"Unfortunately, that is true; but——"

"Nothing can save Bock Gee!"

"No; and nothing can save me."

"Senseless chatter! I can save you! With one blow——"

"But I forbid——"

"Hold, Son of Chen! The moments do not tarry! I must——"

"You shall not! What did my father ever do for you that——"

"There is no time——"

"Answer me!"

"Your father saved me and mine from starvation. It was the winter of the big flood. I was ruined. Your father took us to his dwelling. He was not rich; but he fed us, clothed us, and in the spring gave me rice and pulse, and helped me start my crops again. I could never repay him. This is the only way I can ever pay the debt I owe his family."

Chen Wan's servant entered.

"Master, there is a man at the door. He says he had an appointment with you at this hour."

I saw Chen Wan jerk out his watch, stare at it a moment, then slowly raise his head.

"That is correct," he said calmly. "Tell the caller I shall be ready to receive him in a moment."

The servant left.

"So that is it!" Chen said. "My father saved

your life. You propose to repay him by taking the life of Bock Gee, and saving me that trouble."

"*Aih!* What is a life when one owes such a debt of friendship? But come! It is the time! I——"

"Wait a minute! I seem to remember—now. That winter—— Strange I cannot recall your family name!"

"It doesn't matter. I——"

Suddenly Chen Wan bent forward. His right hand shot out, caught the handkerchief, tore it off the other's face.

I saw the two men leap to their feet. The heavy stools crashed to the floor. But with all that, I heard clearly Chen Wan's hoarse whisper:

"*Bock Gee!*"

"Yes!" cried Bock Gee. "And for the debt I owe your family——"

"No, no! You——"

"——I shall do this deed for you——"

"Stop! In the name of *The Seven Gods*——"

"——that you may stand acquitted before *The Brotherhood!*"

Suddenly Chen Wan made a spring, and Bock Gee dodged out of my sight. I heard Chen Wan utter a horrified cry. I heard the servant answer, and come running down the hallway. Dashing the screen aside, I sprang out.

Bock Gee stood now by the railing of the balcony, a dim figure silhouetted in the faint light of the lanterns. Again I saw the glitter of that long blade. Then—Bock Gee was gone.

Far below, there was a rush of slippered feet. I remember Chen Wan stood at my elbow as I bent over the railing and looked down. Shadowy forms were gathering about something that lay in the cobbled alley. There was a hushed silence. I heard again the voices in the pool room, the click of rolling balls.

Then broke the tumult of scurrying feet and wild, heathenish cries.

. . . . . .

"Well, Minturn," said Chen Wan, weeks later, as we lingered one evening over our tea and almond cakes; "I suppose it was all for the best. Bock Gee was a doomed man, anyway."

"Certainly," I agreed. "In fact, I thought it rather fortunate the way he solved your problem for you."

"True enough," smiled Chen; "but the funny thing is this: *The Brotherhood,* of course, thinks that I lured Bock Gee to my balcony, killed him, and threw him in the alley. And they cannot understand how I persuaded you, a white man of good repute, to stand before the police with me and swear that you saw Bock Gee kill himself!"

THE TESTING OF AH TOY

THERE is a hill in San Francisco where people are wont to go of an evening and look down on that sword of a million lights that begins at the foot of Twin Peaks, sweeps in a majestic curve through the heart of the business section, and dies out in the sinister shadows of Chinatown. To this hill, on a certain night in October, came Ah Toy with his bright-eyed Rosie Lee; and as he swung the big car in to the curb he switched off his lights for an instant and looked in his mirror. Yes, the yellow taxi that had trailed them all evening was there—not a block behind.

"Maybe," said Rosie, gazing pensively at the lights of Market Street, "maybe I'll accept you; and maybe I won't. Remember you haven't asked me yet. I want a proposal—like the American girls. Then *if* I accept you, and if my parents agree, we shall go to the Mission and be married in the American custom."

For a moment the man's slant eyes dwelt thoughtfully on the Chinese quarter; then he glanced quickly at his mirror. Two Chinese had left the yellow taxi. They were talking with the driver and looking in the direction of Toy's car.

"Why, Rosie!" chided Ah Toy. "Why should I ask you to marry me? It isn't done. I have no dealings with you nor your parents. I ask only my

own father, as you know. Then a go-between arranges everything. The astrologer at *The Temple of the Seven Gods* selects the wedding day."

"This is not China——"

"True; but we are Chinese. You have nothing to say about your marriage. For that matter, neither have I. And I am afraid that when I ask my father about it he may forbid me ever to speak to you again. That would be—ah—unfortunate."

"It would serve you right!" exclaimed Rosie, in angry Cantonese. "*Ts!* You have the face of a tiger; the heart of a chicken! Asking your father is the old way; but hasn't your American education taught you anything new?"

Ah Toy, startled for an instant out of his Oriental stolidity, turned to look at the girl. The only daughter of Lee Hop Hing, the shrimp merchant, was strikingly pretty. Her silken-fringed eyes were sloe-black, her features clear-cut as jade. Nor was she the lifeless doll type. An American education had freed her woman's soul, kindled a fire in her eyes, enlivened the beauty of her face. Ah Toy was not blind to this. He admired her greatly when her eyes sparkled with mischief, loved her when they grew meditatively serious, worshipped her when thy flashed with wilful anger.

Rosie's father had named her Yoke, signifying *a Little Gem;* but when Miss Lee renounced all the gods of her father's house and became one of the leaders in Miss Cameron's Sunday School class, she was baptised Rosie, and thus became Rosie Lee. However, at Sing Fat's bazaar, where she was floor manager,

Rosie was known as Lee Ah Yoke. There, also, she was forced to wear Chinese garb and stand near the main entrance by a huge screen, on which red-jawed dragons writhed fantastically on a silken background of black and purple and gold. Dressed in modest trousers of blue silk, an embroidered jacket, and pearl grey shoes, she fitted beautifully into the Oriental picture. When tourists came, Rosie perked her pretty head, gleaming with hair ornaments of gold and pale Yunnan jade, her red lips parted in a smile, and her tongue tripped daintily over the English: "Good afternoon! May I help you find what you wish?"

But one day late in January, when all Chinatown was gay and noisy, with Chinese New Year festivities, Sing Fat's door opened and a young man stepped in, a slender young man whose sharp, slant eyes were mellowed by tortoise-shell glasses, whose face was strong and intellectual, and who wore American tailored clothes that to Rosie's discerning eye spelled good taste and culture. And Rosie, as she met the young man's gaze of almost startled admiration, suddenly found her heart pounding frantically, and could do nothing but stare.

Afterward, when the youth had made his purchase and left, old Leong called Rosie to him. *"Haie!"* he exclaimed, gesticulating angrily with his embroidered spectacle case; "why were you so discourteous? Did you not know that was Toy, the son of Quong?"

Rosie had heard of Quong Ah Toy, but that was their first meeting. As his name signified, he was *The Gifted One of the family of Quong.* He was, she knew,

a graduate of an American college, and prominent in every movement affecting his people. He was a director in *The Green Years Society,* the Chinese name for the Y.M.C.A. His lectures before *The Society for Diffusion of Chinese Thought* aroused wide comment.

"The Americans could learn much from us," Ah Toy was wont to tell Rosie. "We could teach them thrift, industry, patience, contentment——"

"And the Americans could teach you something!" Rosie would interrupt in spirited English. "They could teach you to make the most of to-day instead of mumbling stupid prayers to dead yesterdays. But especially"—and Rosie would bow her head over her tiny bowl of *Embroidered Cloud* tea—"they could teach you how to love!"

At which Toy's face would darken; and Rosie would quickly raise a dainty, pink-tipped hand. "Now, now, Toy!" she would smile up at him. "Let's go for a spin!"

So on this evening, when Rosie knew that she loved Toy even more than the freedom her American education had given her, and when Toy knew that he loved Rosie almost as much as the time-worn customs of his people, the two sat in Toy's big car, the girl gazing wistfully at the lights of Market Street, and the man frowning thoughtfully at the dark shadows of Chinatown.

"To-night," Toy spoke at length with stolid finality, "to-night I shall ask my father."

Rosie turned, a hot retort on her lips, but, suddenly, the waters of sorrow rushed to her eyes and,

she bowed her head and could not speak. It was not that she cared particularly whether they were wed in Chinese or English; it hurt her that Toy cared more for the ways of his people than for her. She wanted him to love her more than anything else in the world. The Americans loved that way!

Suddenly Toy threw the car in reverse gear and backed away from the curb, backed so quickly that Rosie looked up, alarmed. She saw nothing save that a yellow taxi had crowded into the curb just in front of them. When Ah Toy switched to forward and shot by the yellow taxi, she concluded he was angry; and by the time they reached her home, Rosie had repressed her tears and had come to a decision.

Toy could ask his father if he pleased. Little good it would do him! Until he loved her more than his people and their stupid old ways, she would never marry him. No, never! Not even if her own father commanded it!

. . . . . .

Chinatown had put up its shutters and retired to its inner chambers for a late bowl of *gai fan gong*. Save for a few straggling sightseers, the streets were empty, the alleys peopled with furtive shadows that flitted for an instant beneath a street-light, then vanished.

By *The Meat-shop of Heaven-sent Luck* Ah Toy turned and quietly mounted the stairs that led up to his father's house. As he opened the door he saw a light shining through the beaded portières that hung over the sitting-room door. Instantly he caught the pungent odour of Chinese tobacco, and heard the hissing

of lips as someone blew the ashes from the tiny pipe-bowl.

"You drive a hard bargain, venerable Quong."

Ah Toy stopped short. It was the voice of Lee Hop Hing, the shrimp merchant, the father of Rosie Lee.

"Not so!" rumbled Quong's father. "It is a benevolent thing I am doing. To save your business, I am lending you funds; to save you the expense and trouble of keeping her, I am taking your daughter off your hands. Have you considered the matter?"

Ah Toy shrank back against the wall, his hands outspread, fan-like, his eyes wide, his ears straining to catch every word.

"I have smoked many pipes over the matter, excellent Quong. I came to you to-night because this cannot be trusted to a go-between. Bo Wing's spies and knife-men are everywhere. Within the past week two of my men have been slain, and others driven away for fear of their lives. Already Bo Wing has stolen so much of my shrimp fishing business that my profits have shrivelled like a dead hand. I have told you all this truly, excellent Quong, for there is no other to whom I may go for help. But you drive a hard bargain. My *Little Gem*——"

"Have you told me all?"

"*Aih.* I have told you all!"

"*Haie!* You have a nimble tongue, but an awkward memory. You have not told me the real reason that brought you to my house like a thief in the night. But I have heard the gossip from four quarters. Bo

Wing is planning to steal your daughter. He intends to hold her as hostage to force you out of the shrimp business. Is it not so?"

That yellow taxi! Ah Toy felt his heart grow small with sudden fear for Rosie's safety. He had mistaken the two Chinese for thieves; now he trembled with the sudden realisation of what might have happened.

Lee Hop Hing was speaking, his voice hoarse with repressed fear and anger.

"It is true. Bo Wing—*may his wicked bones be torn asunder!*—Bo Wing has spoken his threat. He may strike at any moment."

"Then," said Quong. "Consider well how you may foil his schemes. You need money to buy more ships, to hire men, to import gun-fighters from the river towns. I will advance it. Your daughter is in great danger. Now, I am a lonely old man—a widower for three years, as you know. I will take your daughter to my house and protect her as a wife."

Ah Toy's outspread fingers closed, and he pressed his clenched fists against his breast as though to hush the sudden pounding of his heart. For a moment there was no sound but the spluttering of a pipe and the hissing of lips as the ashes were blown from the tiny bowl.

"But, estimable Quong," said Lee, in a voice of polite protest, "my *Little Gem* has attended the foreign devil schools. She has absorbed many of their ideas. If she has ever thought of marriage, it would be to some young man——"

"That is the trouble with giving our young an American education. It makes them selfish. They come to think only of themselves; never of their elders. I am old; but a girl with the proper upbringing would prefer the shelter of an old tree to weathering the storms of life with an untried sapling."

"Ah Yoke has been properly raised," retorted Lee. "She knows well *The Nine Duties of a Wife*. She has been taught to speak only when spoken to, and to be saving of rice and flour. Yet I could not keep her from learning the ways of the white foreign devils with whom she associated at school. And we must consider that. What will Ah Yoke say, what will she do, when I tell her that she is to be sent to your house to be the wife of a man older than her own father?"

Quong's pipe sizzled angrily for a moment. "I can give her anything," he said proudly.

To this, Lee Hop Hing seemed to have no reply; and after a long silence, Quong spoke:

"Let us conclude the matter. To-morrow, at the first hour after mid-day rice, you may deliver Ah Yoke to my house. I will have the money and documents ready."

Ah Toy bent forward, wide-eyed, breathless. Silent were the spluttering pipes, the hissing lips.

"Quong," said Rosie's father, "you drive a hard bargain; but, let it be so!"

. . . . . .

There was some further talk—"the parting cup"—"watch sharp lest Bo Wing strike to-night"—but it rang in Ah Toy's ears like the distant, half-heard

rumble of a storm that has struck and passed on. Striving hard to appear calm, he waited until Lee stepped out into the hall; then, with but a curt nod in response to Lee's surprised greeting, Ah Toy set the beaded portières clinking angrily, as he strode into his father's presence.

Quong was standing by the table. As Toy entered, the old man's eyes widened in a flash of surprise; then, slowly, the lids drew down like shades over windows.

"Father, I heard everything. You must not, you shall not, do this thing! I am going to marry Ah Yoke myself. I was on my way to ask you to arrange the matter when I overheard you and Lee talking. You—"

"Ts'ing tso!" Quong commanded sharply.

Obediently, Toy sat down.

Quong regarded him for a moment, then stepped to a closet and brought out a jar of *mui kwei lo* and two small bowls. With steady hand he filled the bowls, and passed one to his son.

Rebellion burned in Ah Toy's eyes; but he put out both hands respectfully, took the bowl, and touched it to his lips.

"S-o!" rumbled Quong, clicking his tongue over the precious *Dew of Roses* wine. "You wish to marry. Excellent! But why roar at me like a peddler of bean-curds?"

"Because——"

"Silence! You will hear noise enough when you are married. Remember that, while one key makes no sound, two keys are bound to jangle."

Thoughtfully, Quong took up his pipe, dipped his long fingers into the lacquered tobacco-jar, and filled the bowl. Ah Toy remained silent.

"Still, one must marry," went on Quong, nodding his head resignedly; "for how else can one have sons to worship one's ancestors and preserve the family name? Now the wheel of your life has long since turned twenty. It is time you married. The matter can be quickly arranged. There is dew for every blade of grass. A marriage broker——"

"Father, I want no marriage broker to go seeking a wife for me. I want——"

"You want someone to teach you courtesy! *Aih!* By *The Nine Heavens,* you have become as impudent as a white foreign devil! Hold your tongue whilst I speak!"

Ah Toy, his face tense with anger, turned away.

"My son, I am a lonely old man. I have chosen *The Gem of The Family of Lee* to come to the house of Wong and be my wife, that in her youth I may forget my age. Now, it appears that you, also, desire her. Well"—he pursed his lips and blew a slow stream of smoke—"I congratulate you on your excellent taste. *Kuai!* It is very funny!"

"I am in no mood for jesting, honourable father!"

"So I perceive. Yet it is better to preserve your tranquillity. Cool thoughts ne'er came from hot head!"

"But how can one be calm and see an old man like you take to wife one so young and fair as my *Little Gem?*"

For three slow puffs Quong was silent, his long fingers toying thoughtfully with the crimson and gilt tassel that adorned his long-stemmed pipe.

"You are a good son, Ah Toy," said Quong at length. "Had you spoken of the matter before, it could easily have been arranged. Now it is too late. For while you are blinded by your own desires, I see clearly. And I perceive a great principle.

"It is your filial duty to defer to your father. If I yield to you, I shall lose much face. I shall lose the respect of my own people. No, it cannot be!"

Ah Toy did not know what to say. He sat with bowed head, and eyes dull with grief and anger.

Quong laid a gentle hand on the youth's shoulder.

"My son," he rumbled, "let us not quarrel because, reaching for the same blossom, our hands have struck. *Haie!* You are young; and the garden has many flowers!"

. . . . . .

With slow step and heavy heart, Lee Hop Hing mounted the stairs to his home above *The Enduring Fragrancy and Prosperity Fish Store.* Seeing a light beneath the door of Rosie's room, he paused. Three times he raised a hand to rap on the panel; but each time his hand dropped again to his side; and, finally, with bowed head, the old man passed on to his room. "My *Thousand of Gold,*" he breathed; "I cannot make you unhappy this night. To-morrow——"

In the morning, instead of going below to check the reports of his shrimp fishers, Lee lingered at table with Rosie and her mother; and over many

bowls of *Crab's Eye* tea he told them of his trouble with Bo Wing, dwelling but lightly on the danger that threatened Rosie, but taking great pains to impress it upon her that to save himself from ruin he had been forced to make a pact with the rich merchant, Quong.

Rosie and her mother listened without comment; for they knew that only some matter of great moment would impel the man to discuss business affairs with women-folks. Recalling what had befallen other girls through their father's financial troubles, Rosie was somewhat prepared for the fateful words that came finally from the old man's unwilling lips; and she found now that four years of American college life had not undone four thousand years of Chinese heredity; and so, because she was, after all, a daughter of Cathay, she betrayed neither grief nor anger, but sat like one who has been soothed with opium, her face as white as the white narcissi, her lips parted, her dark eyes wide and glowing like polished ebony.

"My father," she dragged out at length, "does Ah Toy know I have been betrothed to his father?"

Old Lee, about to put the tea-bowl to his lips, stopped short, and his slant eyes widened in sudden comprehension.

"He knows all about it, *Little Gem,*" said Lee kindly.

Rosie glanced up at the clock. It was half-past ten.

"How long has he known?"

"Since last night."

"Father," said Rosie, her voice low and tense, "nine-

teen years have I eaten at your table. I—I have sought love, and it has evaded me. Now if my worthless self can serve you, then—it shall be so!"

Lee Hop Hing stood up. Rosie had bowed her head and was weeping silently. For a moment the old father gazed sadly at her, then without a word he took his street cap of black satin, and walked his way.

The mother, with the wisdom that is woman's, said not a word until Rosie had calmed herself. Then, while the girl sat by the window gazing below at the curious throng moving forever back and forth on the streets of Chinatown, the mother brewed a jar of tea and got out her finest bowls. Spilling a little of the tea on the floor, she breathed a prayer to the gods of the principal doors of the house, and then a little longer supplication to *Chih Nu,* the patron saint of all domestic women.

"You have been a good daughter, *Little Gem;* and you will be a good wife to Quong."

Rosie's jewelled fingers closed gently over the brown and wrinkled hand of her mother.

"And he can give you everything," pursued the mother.

"Everything," echoed Rosie; "everything, mother, except love! And yet, is it not better that I wed one whom I respect but do not love, than to wed one"—she hesitated, and again looked up at the clock—"than one whom I love but cannot respect?"

"*Aih-yah,* daughter; what do you mean?"

Rosie, with a fresh burst of tears, ran quickly to

her room. And there, as she reclined on a window seat, gorgeous with embroidered cushions, her eyes lighted on her Chinese guitar, and she picked it up. Very softly she began an old, old Chinese ballad—a song first voiced by a maid of Cathay more than three thousand years ago:

> *"My love is like a sweet flower*
> *That ripened to bitter fruit . . ."*

Eager to send Rosie to the house of Quong before Bo Wing could make trouble, Lee was glad when he returned at noon and found that the girl and her mother had everything ready. When a bright-eyed young Chinese, wearing a chauffeur's cap, announced the car, Lee took Rosie's bag and led the way down to the machine. Rosie, her head up proudly, a hurt but brave look in her eyes, took her guitar, and followed. When her things had been placed about her feet, the door was closed; and Rosie Lee was on her way to the house of Quong.

Unknown to Rosie—for no one was expected to accompany her—Lee and two of his helpers, armed with keen-edged fish-knives, got into one of Lee's machines and followed. They tried to keep close behind; but the traffic on Grant Avenue and cross streets was heavy. Before they had gone half the distance, a yellow taxi, with curtains down, had swung into line behind Rosie's car. Lee, alarmed, ordered his driver to regain their place; but the yellow taxi gave them no chance.

As Rosie's car turned out of Canton Place, the

yellow taxi stopped. Unable to pass in the narrow street, Lee's driver was forced to stop.

Then, things happened quickly.

Four men in Chinese garb, wearing masks, sprang out of the yellow taxi, ran around the corner whence Rosie's car had gone, and disappeared.

Shouting and gesticulating wildly, Lee and his men leaped out and gave chase. They saw the four men spring on to the running boards of Rosie's car, heard a single, shrill command. Then, sounding a hoarse warning, the car, bearing Rosie and the four men, raced down the street, careened around a corner, and vanished.

Lee, beside himself with terror, ran down the street, cursing everyone who got in his way. When he saw that pursuit was useless, he ran back to where the yellow taxi had stopped. It, too, had vanished.

"Aih-yah!" groaned Lee Hop Hing, getting back into his own car. "Bo Wing has gained his prey!" Then, because he could do nothing else, Lee went home—to wait.

There, more than an hour later, Lee lay on his couch, mumbling queer phrases in Cantonese, while the wife of Lee, crying silently, pressed hot ginger root to the old man's temples.

Someone rapped sharply on the door. Dreading to see Bo Wing's messenger, all the two old people could do was stare; and, presently, the door was thrust open.

Into the room strode Quong. His face was stormy, his slant eyes mere threads of glittering black.

"Lee!" he rumbled. "Why must I learn from street gossip what you should have told me at once?"

"I could not tell you," groaned Lee. "My grief weighed down my tongue."

Quong took a stool and sat down by Lee's couch. The wife of Lee arose and politely withdrew.

"Well," began Quong, "you cannot now expect me to advance the money you need."

Lee shook his head. "I am a ruined man. I am waiting now for word from Bo Wing to learn my fate."

"How unfortunate! Well, hear me one moment! Last night, after you left, I had a talk with my son, Ah Toy. He wanted to marry your daughter whom you had just betrothed to me. Toy is a very filial son. On learning of our agreement, he at once, and gladly, deferred to me, as was his duty, of course." And Quong glared at the man on the couch as though daring him to contradict.

"But I have smoked over the matter. It is written that 'loving hearts find peace in love!' He is a good son, and I want his life to be tranquil. So, now that our arrangement is broken because of your carelessness in failing to guard your daughter, I suggest that you betroth her to Ah Toy. In that event, I will make you a betrothal present of the entire sum I proposed lending you."

Lee sat up so quickly that the sliced ginger fell from his forehead. "But Bo Wing——"

Quong snorted. "My son will make short work of

that jackal. And in return, you must make over to Toy a half-share in all your shrimp business."

"Do not mock me with false hopes!" cried Lee. "The moment my *Thousand of Gold* is safe I will agree to anything. Until then——"

"Then," rumbled Quong, "open your old ears! I have just had wire-talk with Ah Toy. He is in Daly City. He has your *Little Gem*. He outwitted all of us, stole Ah Yoke before Bo Wing could strike. Even the driver of your daughter's car was in Ah Toy's pay.

"Hold now!" chuckled Quong, when Lee made to speak, "we can do nothing. Ah Toy and your *Little Gem* have just been given honourable marriage by a foreign devil preacher!"

. . . . . .

Rosie laid down the long and queerly worded message, and looked up at her husband with eyes that were bright with tears; but now they were tears of joy.

"Ah, my love, this is happiness! To know now that you love me more than your people and their ways; and yet to know that we have their blessing! Why, Toy, do you realise that you eloped with me just like an American lover? I love you for it! Let me sing—your favourite—that old, old Chinese ballad:

> *"'My love for you is like a sun-bright river,*
> *Everflowing, embroidered with sweet lilies . . .'"*

"Heavens, cut it out!" exclaimed Ah Toy in crisp English. "For love of you I have abandoned old Chinese things and agreed to be an American. Therefore, you'd better play—ah—*Yankee Doodle!*"

THE QUEER FORTUNE OF DUCK YOAN

I

"*Hi Low;* that is true, Lau Sin! I know very well that in China I would have to mourn three years for my father, during which time I could transact no business whatever; but this is San Francisco, in the province of California, and here things are different. The Americans look to what is written in one's heart; not to what is written in some old book. A new moon has come and waned since my honourable father ascended the dragon. His body is in its lacquered coffin on the way to the burial ground of our ancestors near the city of Canton. All the ceremonials of respect have been completed. Now—we shall be married!"

Duck Yoan, whose name signified *character plus strength overcoming obstacles,* refilled the tea bowls with the steaming *Hi Ch'un.* He was young, and he wore American clothes. When he spoke the perfect English he had acquired at college, his slant eyes widened and his features lighted with animation; but when he changed to the weirdly musical tones of the Cantonese, his eyelids drooped like curtains and his face became an impenetrable mask.

Opposite the young man, in a booth in her father's tea-room, sat little Lau Sin. Because she was the third girl in a home that had never been blessed with sons to preserve the family name, her parents had named her *Ah Sam,* meaning merely Number 3.

But as she blossomed into bright-eyed girlhood, dainty and pretty as some wood sprite, her father grew to love her very much, and one day gave her the name of *Lau Sin*, signifying *A Nymph of the Pining Willow.*

Lau Sin had been educated in *The University Across the Bay*, but to please her parents she continued to dress in the Chinese style. Her loose-flowing trousers were of the finest Shantung silk, her long blouse of the same material edged with Cantonese embroidery of bright lavender. A single ornament of hammered gold gleamed softly in her sleek black hair.

With a graceful inclination of her head, Lau Sin put out both hands, as anyone should, to accept the tea Duck Yoan offered; and as she took the bowl, her fingers touched his, and she glanced up at him quickly, a half-startled glow in her sloe-black eyes, then as quickly bowed her head again.

"I am very happy to hear you speak that way," she said in tinkling Cantonese. "Your venerable father himself was among the first of our people to abandon many of the old-world customs. How glad I am that he did not insist on a marriage broker selecting a wife for you, as is the custom with the old generation! And what was it he said when you told him you wished to marry me?"

"*Aih,* I remember it well! For about the time it takes one to make the three polite bows, he looked at me without a word; then he took down one of his old books and, marking the characters with the long nail of one forefinger, he began reading down the column in that smoothly vibrant voice we loved to hear:

"——'*Love is a haven of enduring peace; lust is a pitfall of discontent. . . . Oh, that a man, in his green years, could know one from the other!*'

"Then he closed the book and turned to me; and although his eyes were stern, his smile was kind. 'My son,' he said, 'the wheel of your life has scarce turned nineteen. Passion, like a torch, burns out quickly; the heavenly fire of love endures many seasons. Come to me with this matter when you are twenty; and if you are still of the same mind I shall be happy to give my consent. If you are not then of the same mind, you will be happy that I have withheld it.'

"So he spoke to me . . . and now he is gone. . . ."

Lau Sin looked up, her misty eyes gleaming like jewels.

"And you will not be twenty until after the *Festival of the Drifting Blossoms,* which is six moons to come."

"That is true; but it is also true that in the six moons that have come and gone since my father spoke, my mind has not changed. Now I am responsible only to my own heart. We shall be married, Lau Sin, as soon as it can be arranged. *Haie!*" he exclaimed, suddenly widening his long eyes and dropping into English, "if I am old enough to manage my father's business, am I not old enough to manage a wife?"

Whatever Lau Sin thought about that she kept to herself. With a quick smile she bent her sleek head over her bowl of tea. "And is it true, then," she asked, "that you are to take over your father's affairs?"

"Certainly. All my father's lands along the San

Joaquin River, all his money in the banks, and all his importing and shipping business in Chinatown, are now mine. How could it be otherwise when I am the only heir? To-day, at one hour before evening rice, I am to see old Loo Fat, who is to read to me what my father has written concerning the matter. *Haie!* I did not realise it was so near the appointed time! Loo Fat will not like to wait while I chat to you. Well, it is not so hard to leave when I reflect that very soon we shall be together always. *Ho hang la,* Little One!"

"*Ho hang la,* Duck Yoan; I hope you have a safe walk!"

II

Old Loo Fat, general manager of the *Celestial Righteousness and Advancing Prosperity Importing and Shipping Company*, laid his bamboo pipe aside and in a lifeless monotone began reading from the document he had spread on the desk between him and the young man who sat opposite.

". . . . To my first-born, my only and beloved son, Fu Duck Yoan, I bequeath my *Library of Ancient Odes*. May they guide him in his youth, and comfort him in his old age.

"To Fu Duck Yoan I also give, to be taken from current funds, the sum of one hundred thousand dollars; *provided,* however, that he will agree to remain unmarried, and to engage in some useful and profitable pursuit.

"All my other possessions——"

Duck Yoan leaped to his feet. *"Aih-yah!* What is that you read?"

Loo Fat looked up, his thin, yellow face emotionless as an image.

"Did you not hear, son of Fu? Your honourable father gives you his library. Also if you will refuse to marry, and, instead, will engage your time and talents in some business, you are to be given at once the sum of one hundred thousand dollars. It is very plain—and very liberal."

Duck Yoan stood like one stunned. Then, slowly, his black eyes narrowed and grew slant. He flung out a hand and spoke savagely:

"You speak lying words, Loo Fat. Give me the paper!"

Without a word, the old manager handed over the document.

"My father's writing!" the boy whispered to himself. . . . *Aih!* It is true!" Then, quickly, he finished reading the will:

"All my other possessions, more particularly enumerated hereinafter, are to be kept intact, and the business I have built up is to be conducted by and under the trust established in the attached Trust Agreement, one half of the profits to be divided semi-annually among the employees who remain faithful to my interests, the other half to be given to the society which I have established for the relief of any of my countrymen who may be found needy. . . ."

The paper slipped from the boy's fingers and fell to the desk. Loo Fat calmly picked it up.

"My father—did that! My father whom I always revered, says I must not marry Lau Sin, whom I love; that I must engage my time in business, which I hate."

"Your father was a very wise man," remarked Loo Fat calmly.

"He was a—" Duck Yoan checked himself. Hurt and angry as he was, he could not bring himself to speak ill of his father.

Loo Fat folded the will, tied it with a fibre cord, and locked it in a drawer of his desk. Then he picked up the abacus, with which he had been calculating the month's profits, and methodically flicked the counters into position. "You are very ungrateful," he said, reaching for an account book.

"Ungrateful! Should I be thankful that my father has left a two-edged knife in my heart? My father lived his life as he pleased. While he lived, I obeyed him in all things. Why should he now curse me with —this?"

Loo Fat grunted. "A strange way to speak of such a princely gift!"

"A gift! What mockery! It is not a gift. It is the price of my freedom!"

Duck Yoan walked to the window and for a long moment stood looking down at the noisy bustling throng of motley humanity on the main street of San Francisco's Chinatown. Then, with bowed head, he began walking slowly back and forth in front of Loo Fat's desk. When he spoke, it seemed to be more to himself than to his father's old manager.

"It was at about my age that my father left his

home in Canton and crossed the seas to this land of the white foreign devil. When, with others, he was driven down the gang plank, kicked and cursed by the foreign devil sailors, he set foot on shore with only the mean clothes on his back and in his purse but one tael of silver—less than I spend in one day on cigarettes. But he had his stout heart, and he went to work. It was a strange land where men spoke a strange language and followed strange customs. My father struggled on, minding not the taunts of the foreigners nor the jealousy of his less industrious countrymen. Thus, the years passed—and then he died.

"My father came with neither money nor learning, nor friends; he died the richest man in Chinatown, praised for his scholarly attainments, mourned by a host of loyal friends. His countrymen call him 'Rich and Noble.' The foreign devils call him 'The Whitest Man in Chinatown.' "

Suddenly Duck Yoan stopped and faced Loo Fat. Tears gleamed in his angry eyes.

"Do you hear me, Loo? My father did all that! Well, I am a son of Fu. I can do as well—and better. Keep your hundred thousand. I will walk out of here a free man!"

Unconcernedly, Loo Fat leaned back in his chair, and through narrowed lids eyed the boy for a moment.

"Then I am to understand," he spoke with chilling precision, "that you persist in your intention to marry Lau Sin?"

"Marry?" echoed Duck Yoan bitterly. "Can a beg-

gar ask a princess to share his rags? *Aih,* there is the double edge to the sword with which my father has reached out from the grave to strike me. He has cut me off from both fortune and happiness."

"I think," said Loo Fat, again bending over his accounts, "that you are out of your head to-day. Come when you are more yourself and we will discuss this further."

Duck Yoan stepped back and looked at the old manager much as one might stare at a stranger; and for about the time it takes to make the three times three bows before one's ancestral tablets, there was silence save for the sibilant whispering of Loo Fat's lips as he cast up his accounts, and the muffled clamour of the streets that came faintly from below. Then, presently, the youth got out his monogrammed case and calmly selected a cigarette. Lighting it with a graceful flourish, he turned to Loo Fat.

"Mr. Loo," said Duck Yoan, in his politely crisp English, "any further discussion with you is unnecessary. In fact, should I be so unfortunate as to meet you again, I will wring your confounded neck—you skinny piece of dried pork!"

III

Midnight on the river. The moonlight softening the ugly outlines of wharf and freight sheds. The mingled odour of heated engine and fragrant fields. The steamer puffing and creaking impatiently as it warps into the lonely siding. The raucous cries of deck hands as they run out the gang plank. Then:

"All that trouble just for one Chink!"

Duck Yoan heard the remark, and boiled with indignation; then he remembered. Clad in rough working clothes, a bundle under his arm, hastening down the gang plank with the springy step of a coolie, he looked not at all like the cultured son of Fu, who was accustomed to every deference, but very much like an unlettered Chinese labourer, to whom taunts and insults were a daily portion. Mechanically, as he watched the steamer disappear around a bend in the river, he reached for his cigarettes; and again memory smote him. His case, like every other possession, had been sacrificed; for it had been a matter of pride with Duck Yoan to pay every debt before he said good-bye to San Francisco. In his bundle he had a single change of clothing; and in his pocket—he had sold his purse—less than a dollar.

A week later Duck Yoan stood again on the wharf and watched the steamer pass out of view up the river. In his hand he held a litter given him by a countryman to whom he had several times applied for work. The letter, much to Duck Yoan's surprise, proved to be from Loo Fat. It ran:

> "Although you left without the courtesy of informing me where I could communicate with you, I have it in writing from a friend that you are in the same town where your father started out more than a generation ago, and that you are hungry, without money to buy food, and unable to find honourable work.

"It is not fitting that the son of Fu should accept charity from strangers. Here is a draft for enough to buy a meal and a ticket to San Francisco. Return, accept your honourable father's conditions, and receive the gift he has provided for you."

Thoughtfully, Duck Yoan left the lighted wharf and sought out the pile of empty potato sacks that for six nights had been his only bed. The letter had a very strange effect on him. During the past week, tramping the dust-deep river roads, seeking humbly for work and being rebuffed everywhere, Duck Yoan had found much food for sober reflection. He realised now that, while he could not accept the draft, he had in his heart only the kindliest feelings for his father's old manager.

Early the next morning, Duck Yoan sought out Ah Quong, the countryman who had given him the letter. There, in Ah Quong's store, he wrote to Loo Fat. The letter was couched in terms at once sincere and dignified. "If I must accept charity," the letter concluded, "is it not better that it be from strangers whom I can repay, than from my father whom I can never repay for the many things he did for me while he lived?" Then, pinning the draft to the letter, Duck Yoan put it in an envelope, sealed, and addressed it. Swallowing his pride, he begged the loan of a stamp.

A long time Ah Quong looked at the boy, his leathery old face wrinkled quizzically, his lips puffing thoughtfully on his long-stemmed pipe.

"I will repay you as soon as possible," promised

Duck Yoan, now painfully embarrassed, and unable to look up at Ah Quong.

"The stamp! Oh, yes! I had forgotten. I was thinking. Last night, one of my men, a handler of asparagus cases, broke his arm. I was wondering if you would take his place. The terms are thirty dollars a month, bed and rice. Also, since you have an education and can do sums on the abacus as well as on the foreign devil adding-machine, I shall need you in the office in the evenings, for which, of course, I will pay extra. If you will remain and share morning rice with me, I can explain your duties and you can begin work at once."

That evening, Duck Yoan borrowed another stamp, and wrote his first letter to Lau Sin.

IV

The days flew by on dragon wings—days of muscle-hardening, brain-clearing labour. During the long sunlight hours, Duck Yoan toiled in the scorching fields, or in the stuffy warehouses, handling innumerable asparagus cases; during the long evenings, he sat in the office with Ah Quong, a smelly lamp over his head, the abacus on the desk before him, adding endless columns of figures. In a month he won promotion and was made assistant foreman of a gang of asparagus handlers; in two months he was night foreman at the shipping station.

Six months after the night Duck Yoan walked down the gang plank, he was chief overseer of Ah Quong's vast river interests. Dressed in a cool suit of white crash, in an automobile driven by a Chinese chauffeur,

he made daily visits of inspection to the fields and canneries and supply stores operated throughout the islands by his employer.

Since returning that draft to Loo Fat there had been no further communication from his father's manager. This worried Duck Yoan not at all; but he was considerably perturbed over Lau Sin. For five months she had written regularly; then, without a word of explanation, her letters ceased. Duck Yoan endured the suspense as long as he could; then, on a certain Saturday night, he borrowed his employer's machine, packed his bag, and drove to San Francisco.

At eleven o'clock the next forenoon, well groomed as usual, but looking much browner and heavier, Duck Yoan walked down Grant Avenue and paused before the tea-room of Lau Sin's father. There, something pasted on the door panel arrested his eye. It was a strip of crimson paper bearing many Chinese characters in deep black. Duck Yoan had seen these before, and at a glance he understood.

Lau Sin's father was announcing her betrothal. She was to marry the eldest son of Chang, named Gow. The astrologers had set the wedding for Sunday evening.

"By *The All-seeing One!*" groaned Duck Yoan. "This is Lau Sin's wedding day! And to Chang Gow—that tea-guzzling son of a turtle! *Haie-e-e-e . . .*"

Blindly, Duck Yoan hastened on. Up and down the hills back of Chinatown he walked until he downed his rage and grief; then he returned to his room to sit down and reason this out.

From the announcement he knew it was a Chinese

betrothal, which meant that it had been arranged by the father of Lau Sin without consulting her wishes. The arrangement might be agreeable to Lau Sin, and it might not. Duck Yoan decided to find out. With a half-formed plan in his mind, he packed his bag, paid his bill, and drove to Chinatown.

Because he was a son of Fu, and an old friend of the family, he obtained permission to speak with Lau Sin; and she met him in one of the tea-rooms where it had been their custom to while away many a happy hour over their tea and cakes.

Lau Sin did not appear happy. Her face was the colour of rice flour, and in her eyes were traces of the waters of sorrow. When they had exchanged greetings, and Duck Yoan had answered briefly her questions as to his welfare, the young man said:

"To-night, you are to marry Gow of the family of Chang. Are you happy?"

Lau Sin bowed her head.

"I am happy to obey my father's wishes. Besides, no one else wants me."

"What is that? Ah! How can you say that to me, Lau Sin?"

"Well, if anyone wanted me very much they would have taken me long before this."

"But, Little One, don't you understand that I have been working hard and saving every copper *cash* so that I could prepare a home fit to receive you? I had no money and——"

"And am I an idol of porcelain that must be kept in a box?" demanded the girl with sudden anger. "Money, money, money! How I hate it! It was be-

cause Chang Gow's father offered much money as the marriage price that my father betrothed me to him. It was because you were greedy for money to buy me things I do not need and never wanted, that you have let the months go by and left me alone. I told you many times in my letters that I wanted to work with you. I know *The Nine Duties of a Wife*, and I know how to be saving of rice and flour. I would have been the mean one within your house, would have shared the last grain of rice, only to be with you. Had you loved me, you could not have remained away. Now—now, it is too late."

Duck Yoan was too astounded for words. He had done what he had thought the right and honourable thing; and now he was being told that he had acted stupidly and selfishly.

"Well, Lau Sin," said the youth, after they had talked about this and that without getting anywhere, "I ask but one favour. I want you to accept a poor gift I have for you. Come, let me show it to you!"

He led the way to the machine that waited by the curb, the big motor purring impatiently. Opening the door, Duck Yoan began unfastening his bag. Lau Sin drew near and looked over his shoulder.

Suddenly, Duck Yoan swung around, caught the girl about the waist, and lifted her swiftly but gently into the car. Slamming the door shut, he released his hold on Lau Sin, and slid behind the wheel. Gears meshed. . . . The car started. . . . Second. . . . Third. . . . Around the corner on two wheels. . . . Up the hill, the exhaust roaring. . . . And out of Chinatown!

"*Aih-yah,* Duck Yoan! What are you doing?"

"Running away with you, Life of my Heart!"

"But you must not! My father——"

"I'll arrange matters with him!"

"But Chang Gow!"

"I'll settle him!"

"But they will kill you! Oh, Duck Yoan, how piteous! You must take me back!"

"Never, Little One! Never, so long as I have a drop of blood left in my body; or," he added, in flippant English, "a drop of gasoline left in my tank!"

Lau Sin, being a woman, remembered suddenly a reason that overshadowed everything else.

"But I—I have no clothes!"

"Do clothes matter when the heart is happy? And you are happy, are you not, Lau Sin?"

"I—I am!" breathed Lau Sin; and then, to prove it, bowed her pretty head and cried.

V

It was *The Hour of Lengthening Shadows.* Sitting on the screened porch of their little cottage, which Ah Quong had thoughtfully provided, Duck Yoan and Lau Sin watched the sun go down behind the willows that fringed the river. They had been married a week—and Lau Sin had just received a letter from her father.

"Mother of Heaven, guard his old years! Do you hear what my father says, Duck Yoan? He is very glad that I have such a tiger-hearted husband. He sends us his blessings. And—and he will send my clothes to-morrow!"

"Yes, Precious One, I hear," replied Duck Yoan. He did not look around. He was frowning at a spot by the river bank where he had seen several stealthy figures scurrying along in the shadows of the willows.

"He thinks it a great joke," the girl went on. "Everyone is laughing at Chang Gow. And Chang Gow is furious. He—oh, Duck Yoan, you must watch—Chang Gow has sworn by *The Bloody Wine* that he will slay you!"

"Don't let such things disturb your happiness, Little One," said Duck Yoan, rising. "Chang Gow and his men cannot find us here. Please run inside now. I must see Ah Quong a moment."

Obediently, Lau Sin went into the house. Duck Yoan slipped out the screen door, then, with his latch-key, locked it. As he turned away, a man ran around the house toward him. Duck Yoan spoke quietly.

"What is it, Lee?"

"Master! Men by the river! They do not look friendly! Chang——"

"Get Quan and Gar, and the son of Gar, and watch the house. Do not let Lau Sin out. Do not, under any circumstances, let anyone in."

"But you, master——"

"I go to meet Chang Gow."

"*Aih-yah!* You must not! Chang's knife is long, his arm swift. And he has sworn——"

"Go!" commanded Duck Yoan, and walked rapidly toward the river.

He found Chang Gow and two other men crouching by the willows.

"You have business with me, son of Chang?"

Chang Gow started guiltily. He looked at his two men, then at Duck Yoan.

"I have, son of Fu!" cried Chang. "You have caused me to lose much face; and for that——"

Swiftly, Chang Gow whipped out his long knife. With the leap of a tiger he sprang at Duck Yoan.

Duck Yoan, unarmed, stepped aside. As the knife flashed by him, he caught Chang by the wrist. The force of Chang's lunge almost threw the two men off their feet, but Duck Yoan held on. Watching his chance, he flung his other arm about Chang's neck, brought the back of his clenched fist up quickly, and forced Chang's head back.

Chang Gow fought desperately—fought for his honour, which, according to his code, was more dear to him than his life. Duck Yoan fought for his life, which had become very dear to him, and his months of hard work now stood him in good stead. In less time than it takes to behead the three sacrificial chickens, Chang Gow was lying on the sand clutching a broken arm, and his long knife was hurtling over the willows into the river.

Duck Yoan turned quickly to face Chang's two men. They had watched the progress of the fight, but it had ended before they realised it. Now they were creeping upon Duck Yoan; but seeing him turn upon them, they fell back.

Duck Yoan looked down at Chang Gow.

"Go back to your father, son of Chang. Tell him this is not China. This is America, where men marry for love—and the best man wins. . . . A boat leaves

in a half-hour. My men will be happy to make sure you are aboard. *Ho hang la!*"

Loud cries broke out suddenly from somewhere near the cottage. Duck Yoan, his stomach cold with fear for Lau Sin, ran at all speed. As he rounded the corner of the house, he halted before a strange scene. A man lay stretched on his face in the sand. Sitting on him, all talking and gesticulating excitedly, were Lee and Gar, and the son of Gar.

"He came," shouted Lee, "and sought for you. We told him to walk his way, as you instructed us. He refused."

"Who are you?" demanded Duck Yoan, trying to get a glimpse of the man's face.

Lee and Gar, and the son of Gar, fell silent. A smothered voice rose with quiet dignity.

"I am Loo Fat!"

It took much brushing to restore Loo Fat's clothes to their usual tidiness, and many bowls of Imperial tea to restore his customary tranquillity. The moon had risen over the silent fields when the old manager pushed his bowl aside and addressed Duck Yoan.

"Of course, you understand now that, having married, you have rendered void that part of your father's will in which he left you one hundred thousand dollars?"

"Certainly," replied Duck Yoan, with polite dignity. "I never considered putting my head in that noose."

"I understand," said Loo Fat, nodding his head many times. "Therefore, it is my duty now to inform you that, to the will you read, your father had added

a codicil which I was not then at liberty to show you. This codicil is too long to read to-night; but I can tell you that you have most satisfactorily complied with all the terms of the codicil. Therefore, you have come into sole and unrestricted possession of everything your father owned.

"Your honourable father," went on old Loo, while Duck Yoan sat speechless, "was a very wise man. He knew that although he had provided you with an education, you were yet green and untried; and so he put you to a test. Had you been weak and selfish, you would have had the hundred thousand and nothing more; but since you have proved to be a worthy son of Fu, you now come into your full heritage. Do you understand?"

Duck Yoan understood more than Loo Fat knew. His mind had run quickly back to that night he walked down the gang plank with his bundle beneath his arm. How little he realised at that time his youth and inexperience, how unfitted he was to manage his father's vast possessions. Now he knew. Toil had given him strength, experience had instilled confidence.

Presently Duck Yoan realised that Loo Fat was speaking:

"Sir, for as long as it takes a well-mannered person to drink three bowls of tea you have forgotten your guest. Could you release Lau Sin's hand long enough to serve me *The Parting Cup?*"

THE END

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